

Kyle Marksteiner

Most of us would agree that Hollywood has lost its creative edge. Instead of coming up with new material, the studios just reboot or reload movies from a few years ago. Meet the new Spider Man, same as the old Spider Man.

It also seems like every few years that the New Mexico Environment Department attempts to weaponize its permit with the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant. This permit is officially related to the NMED's limited jurisdiction over the chemical (not nuclear) aspect of waste shipments.

Unofficially, the regulatory process is frequently bogged down in a political struggle related to Los Alamos. Here we go again.

I believe the NMED's current attempt to force a WIPP permit change is unethical and legally unsound.

While there are a number of significant disputes going on in the country right now regarding state versus federal authority, each issue must be considered on its own merits.

We would all hopefully agree that issues related to military protection are of national concern. The jets which take off at our Air Force bases do not cease patrolling along state lines. Full fledged environmental cleanups also ignore state lines- we do not stop cleaning up a river because of some arbitrary barrier.

The waste cleanup related to our national defense effort is both a military issue and an environmental cleanup issue, and is, therefore very clearly a topic of federal concern. The state has every right to represent its interests, but it cannot be allowed to dictate unrealistic and harmful quotas related to the percentage of New Mexico waste received.

WIPP is doing a great job of cleaning up all of the provided waste from Los Alamos. Los Alamos waste has been prioritized and will continue to be prioritized. Threatening to reduce WIPP's capacity to punish Los Alamos could actually hurt this effort.

I would also like to address the concept that opposition to something is somehow more "worthy" of note than quiet support. People who ask to speak to the manager of a restaurant are more likely to draw attention than those who do not, for certain. WIPP has thousands and thousands of supporters in Southeastern New Mexico whose generally quiet support cannot fairly be dismissed.

Opponents to WIPP often site transportation as justification for their right to dissent. WIPP trucks pass near their house along the highway west of Santa Fe. Again, those of us who have been around for long enough will recall that said highway was specifically constructed because of WIPP.

A flawless transportation record aside, WIPP trucks also pass along highways near Carlsbad. In addition to having comparable levels of investment on the transportation front, waste is also unloaded in our backyard by our friends and neighbors. The residents of Southeastern New Mexico's voices matter the most by any possible metric.

The NMED is staffed by professionals who are qualified to fight for the safety of the state's residents. It is unfair of the state to attempt to coerce these professionals into political theater, which in my opinion this permit modification represents.

I respectfully ask the NMED to withdraw this proposed permit modification. If this is not possible, then, for the purpose of transparency, this issue should be resolved through a public hearing.

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