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I was among many at the WIPP site in the early morning hours of March 26, 1999 when the first shipment of TRU waste arrived at WIPP. Not only was that shipment the first ever, it was also the first from Los Alamos National Laboratory. The cleanup of legacy TRU waste from LANL is important, but NMED's initiated permit modification is contrived, damaging to WIPP's ability to efficiently achieve its national cleanup mission and fails to improve safety for New Mexicans at all. I am opposed to this permit modification.

While I no longer work at WIPP, I was an employee for many years and know first-hand how the people at WIPP prioritize safety and cleanup of TRU waste. If NMED shares those goals, then why not focus efforts on the site that determines how much waste is ready to be shipped to WIPP? That site is not WIPP itself, but rather Los Alamos National Laboratory. The truth is that this permit modification would not increase the amount of waste coming from Los Alamos, but instead would cause a decrease of shipments from other sites that DO have waste ready. No wonder some of WIPP's staunchest critics like this permit modification so much. Probably because they also know that decreased shipments from other sites means decreased jobs here in Southeast New Mexico.

Unfortunately, it appears that this permit modification plays into the hands of those who continually criticize Carlsbad and Southeast New Mexico, while benefiting from the financial resources our industries bring to the rest of the state. This permit modification is misguided and does not serve the best interests of New Mexicans or anyone else.