

James Cobb

My name is James Cobb, President of United Steel Workers Local 12-9477 representing workers at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in Carlsbad, New Mexico.

I am here today not only to request that our Local Union have a formal seat at the table during these proceedings and future hearings, but also to express the concerns our membership has regarding the proposed permit modifications.

The workers at WIPP support the mission of environmental cleanup and understand the importance of safely removing legacy waste from sites across the country. Our members take pride in that mission every day. However, we also believe the proposed permit modifications could create unintended consequences that deserve serious discussion before any final decisions are made.

Our Local is concerned that changes involving shipment prioritization and allocation could negatively impact the long-term stability of operations at WIPP and the broader DOE cleanup mission. We believe these changes could create bottlenecks, reduce flexibility for other generator sites, and potentially leave facilities across the country struggling to move waste if shipments become too heavily dependent on one site or one waste stream.

Our members also have concerns about how these modifications could affect workforce stability, future operational planning, and the ability to maintain consistent work necessary to support the mission safely and effectively. The workforce is directly tied to the success of this facility, and decisions of this magnitude should include labor representation and operational input from those performing the work every day.

USW Local 12-9477 believes collaboration leads to better solutions. We are not here to oppose cleanup efforts. We are here to ensure that decisions are made with a full understanding of the operational, workforce, and long-term mission impacts these permit changes may create.

For that reason, we respectfully request that USW Local 12-9477 be formally included in future discussions, stakeholder engagement opportunities, and hearings regarding these permit modifications and the future of WIPP operations.

Thank you for your time and consideration.