

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3101

February 15, 2001

COMMITTEES:  
BUDGET  
APPROPRIATIONS  
ENERGY AND NATURAL  
RESOURCES  
INDIAN AFFAIRS  
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Dr. Robert A. Eisenstein  
Assistant Director  
Directorate for Mathematical and Physical Sciences  
National Science Foundation, Suite 1205 N.  
4201 Wilson Boulevard  
Arlington, Virginia 22230

Dr. James F. Decker  
Director Office of Science (Acting)  
U.S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Drs. Eisenstein and Decker:

I want to convey my enthusiastic support for the use of the Department of Energy's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) for missions beyond nuclear waste disposal. I've been briefed on the exciting opportunities for particle physics research and other projects benefitting from the unique environment of WIPP.

These projects have my very strong interest. The American taxpayer has invested a great deal of energy and resources into building this federal underground site for its current mission. I strongly support an opportunity to leverage the existing investment in support of additional national missions.

You also have Governor Johnson's letter indicating the commitment of the State of New Mexico for these new projects. I've personally discussed these opportunities with the city leaders of Carlsbad and you have their strongest endorsement. These expressions of interest from the federal, state, and local level certainly enhance the support that these projects would receive at WIPP.

Some have called into question the strength of DOE's commitment to continue making the WIPP underground capabilities available to researchers. As long as the proposed research will not compromise WIPP's primary mission of waste disposal, I assure you that I will continue to support such research.

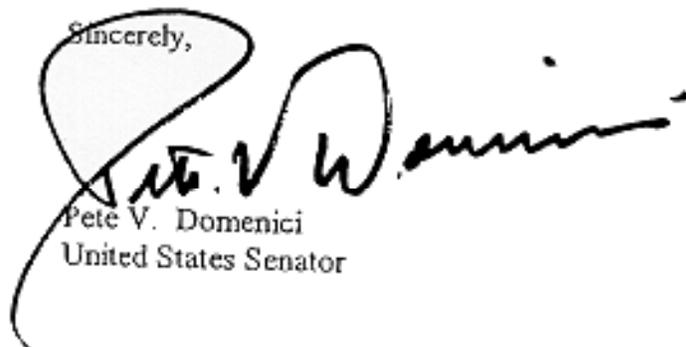
Others have questioned whether DOE can support this research at WIPP. The simple answer is that it most definitely can, with the proviso that its DOE/EM funding is designated for support of the Congressionally mandated TRU waste disposal mission. The DOE Office of Science and/or NSF would be the appropriate funding sources for new science research areas that fall outside the DOE/EM responsibilities. However, WIPP infrastructure, when it is not supporting the EM mission, should be available to support the science research mission. I encourage both of you to initiate discussions with DOE/EM to coordinate the science mission with the waste disposal mission. I foresee no difficult problems in such coordination and joint use.

I understand that some have questioned whether the depth of WIPP is adequate for all of the proposed science experiments and whether further excavation at WIPP to create deeper experimental facilities would compromise its EPA certification. To support any possible need for deeper facilities, I request by this letter, that:

- DOE/EM analyze the costs and evaluate any impact on repository performance if a lower horizon were to be created for some experiments, and
- EPA review the DOE evaluation to confirm that such changes would not compromise repository performance.

Please keep my office informed as your agency's deliberations mature.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pete V. Domenici". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning and a long, sweeping tail that extends downwards and to the left.

Pete V. Domenici  
United States Senator

cc:  
The Honorable Spencer Abraham, DOE  
The Honorable Christie Whitman, EPA  
Dr. John Bahcall, Princeton, Institute for Advanced Study  
Dr. Ines Triay, Manager, DOE Carlsbad Field Office