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Los Alamos Lab Suppresses Data on Negative Economic Impact on Surrounding Counties; Wealthy White Los Alamos County Asks for 3,000 Acres Seized from Hispanics and Native Americans

Santa Fe, NM – The independent newspaper *Rio Grande Sun* has recently reported that the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) had struck data from a study it had commissioned showing that the Lab had negative fiscal impacts on Santa Fe, Taos and Rio Arriba Counties in FY 2017. This egregious censorship has political implications since the New Mexican congressional delegation justifies and supports the planned expanded production of plutonium “pit” bomb cores for nuclear weapons as vital for the economic well-being of northern New Mexico.

The *Rio Grande Sun* reported that the original draft of the study stated that the Lab’s presence cost Santa Fe County \$1,414,655, Taos County \$809,406 and Rio Arriba County \$3,215,566 in FY 2017, which was deleted from the final study. It also stated that the Lab’s fiscal impact on Los Alamos County was a positive \$11.6 million from state gross receipts taxes on Lab operations. The seven counties surrounding Los Alamos County received a combined gross receipts taxes of only \$6 million (without a breakdown between counties).

Los Alamos County is the 4th wealthiest county in the USA, with an annual median household income of \$114,670. It is also an ethnic island of 71% non-Hispanic whites while New Mexico as a whole is 49.3% Hispanic, 11% Native American and 36.8% non-Hispanic white.¹ Rio Arriba County’s annual median household income is a third of Los Alamos County’s at \$37,174.²

In the midst of this economic disparity and a national reckoning over racial injustice, Los Alamos County is asking the federal National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) for a transfer at no cost of over 3,000 acres seized during WW II in large part from Hispanic homesteaders with little or no compensation.³ Moreover, LANL’s entire current area was the ancestral homeland of the Puebloan people, and San Ildefonso Pueblo’s “Sacred Lands” still extend deep into the Lab’s boundaries (and contiguous to LANL’s largest dump with some 200,000 cubic yards of radioactive and toxic wastes).

¹ From <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/losalamoscountynewmexico> and <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/NM>

² 2016 median household income from <https://ibis.health.state.nm.us/indicator/view/NMPopDemoMedianInc.Cnty.html>

³ See, for example, *The Scientific Conquest of New Mexico: Local Legacies of the Manhattan Project 1942-2015*, pages 165-168,

https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=amst_etds

Los Alamos County says it needs this land to house more Lab workers for expanded plutonium pit production. But this proposed land transfer to the already wealthy County is ironic because no future pit production is scheduled to maintain the safety and reliability of the existing nuclear weapons stockpile. Instead, future production will be for modified pits for speculative new-design nuclear weapons that can't be tested because of the global testing moratorium, hence possibly lowering stockpile reliability.

Alternatively, new modified pits could prompt the U.S. to resume nuclear weapons testing, with severe international proliferation consequences. All of this is unnecessary because independent experts have found that existing plutonium pits last at least a century (the average pit age in the active stockpile is less than 40 years old). In addition, more than 15,000 pits are already stored at NNSA's Pantex Plant near Amarillo, TX.

Chuck Montaña, Nuclear Watch NM Steering Committee member, commented:

“This is yet another example of the racial disparity that exists in the wake of communities like Los Alamos, established under the protective umbrella of government sanctioned white privilege. When you take something by force and don't pay for it, that's called stealing. So why is land stolen by the US government from the original Hispanic and Native American owners not being given back to them? Why does it take 60 years and a major class action lawsuit to get reparations (albeit minimal) for people of color, while Los Alamos County may have 3,000 acres handed to it just for the asking? And for what . . . so that endless quantities of taxpayer money can be wasted building unneeded nuclear weapons? As the national reckoning over racial injustice unfolds, let us not forget how Los Alamos Lab came to be and the insult to injury that giving away land stolen from others represents.”

Mr. Montaña, born and raised in Santa Fe, NM, worked at the Los Alamos National Laboratory for 32 years where he investigated allegations of fraud, waste and abuse, becoming a federally protected whistleblower after discovering managerial malfeasance at the highest levels. Related congressional hearings were held. His award winning book [*Los Alamos: Secret Colony. Hidden Truths*](#) is a must read. He has an MBA and four professional certifications related to audits and investigations.

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The June 26, 2020 Rio Grande Sun article *Inequities Edited Out of Los Alamos National Lab Study* is available at http://www.riograndesun.com/news/inequities-edited-out-of-los-alamos-national-lab-study/article_ea042414-b7f8-11ea-ada6-a7134ccaff97.html

The proposed transfer of over 3,000 acres to Los Alamos County has been reported at <https://losalamosreporter.com/2020/05/27/los-alamos-county-seeks-to-acquire-3500-acres-of-land-in-white-rock-from-doe-nnsa/> and https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/los-alamos-county-seeks-over-3-000-acres-from-energy-department/article_7850ade6-aa61-11ea-9eb3-23e92f0d5927.html

See NukeWatch NM plutonium pit production fact sheet at <https://nukewatch.org/plutonium-pit-production-fact-sheet/> This press release is available online at <https://nukewatch.org/lab-suppresses-economic-data-pr-6-30-20/>

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