



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE June 27, 2013

Contact: Jay Coghlan, Nuclear Watch NM, 505.989.7342, c. 505.692.5854, jay@nukewatch.org

Senate Appropriations Cuts Nuclear Bomb Life Extension Program; NM's Tom Udall Tries to Restore Funding to Bloated Program

Santa Fe, NM – Today the Senate Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee reported that it cut funding for the National Nuclear Security Administration's B61 nuclear bomb Life Extension Program (LEP). This is a significant victory for good governance, and it could positively influence future nuclear arms control. The Obama Administration's request for the B61 LEP was \$537 million for FY 2014, a 45% increase above FY 2013. Senate Energy and Water cut it by \$168 million to \$369 million, and directed NNSA to look at alternatives since the full-blown program is experiencing massive cost overruns.

Senator Tom Udall opposed this cut since most of the B61 work will take place at the Los Alamos and Sandia nuclear weapons labs in New Mexico. Udall now sits on Senate Energy and Water, and successfully engineered a provision that would restore B61 LEP funding if certain cost and schedule requirements are met. Meanwhile House appropriators have added \$23 million to the already bloated program, which sets up a sharp difference that must be reconciled in conference. This is where "deals" tend to be cut, and Tom Udall's position on the B61 LEP could be critical.

In the past few years Senator Tom Udall actively supported a Walmart-sized "CMRR-Nuclear Facility" at Los Alamos that exploded in costs from \$600 million to ~\$6 billion, which for fiscal reasons the Obama Administration prudently decided to delay. The CMRR's main mission is to quadruple LANL's production of plutonium cores (or "pits") for nuclear weapons. Expanded pit production is necessary only for new-design nuclear weapons or heavily modified existing weapons.

If the full Life Extension Program that Tom Udall currently supports goes forward the estimated 400 B61 nuclear bombs will literally cost more than their weight in gold to refurbish (and that does not include original production costs). Moreover, the program will radically improve the bomb, giving it new military capabilities by turning it into a precisely targeted smart bomb and mating it to future bombers for supersonic stealthy delivery. Currently the main mission of B61's is as tactical nuclear weapons in NATO countries, a relic of the Cold War. Improved B61's fly in the face of Obama's just declared goal of reducing the presence of battlefield nuclear weapons in Europe, even as he proposes to negotiate with the Russians for further arms reductions.

The nuclear weapons labs' have voracious appetites for federal funding, with their directors simultaneously acting as the presidents of the executive board of the for-profit limited liability corporations that run the labs (those private LLCs pay 2/3's of the directors' annual compensation of around one million dollars). Business will boom with never-ending Life Extension Programs, and Sandia and Los Alamos are not satisfied with just one Life Extension Program for the B61. They already plan yet another one 20 years from now that initial figures indicate would be even more expensive.

In fact, the labs plan a never-ending cycle of Life Extension Programs that intentionally seek to implement major design changes for all existing types of nuclear weapons in our stockpile, costing at least \$60 billion (while the doubling of costs has so far been the rule). Further, these major changes may undermine our own national security by eroding confidence in performance reliability when major modifications cannot be full-scale tested. We should instead stick to proven existing nuclear weapons designs, and avoid serious changes which arguably profit only nuclear weapons contractors. Genuine maintenance of our nuclear weapons stockpile, such as the well-understood replacement of limited life components, would be prudent, technically sound and relatively inexpensive.

New Mexico, the state that Tom Udall represents, was just ranked as the worst state of all fifty for the well-being of its children, where more than 25% live in poverty. In sharp contrast, Los Alamos County, dominated by the lab, is the second richest county in the entire USA.

Jay Coghlan, director of Nuclear Watch New Mexico, commented, "Tom Udall could better serve all New Mexicans if he focused more on improving the lives of our children instead of the nuclear weapons labs and the service life of an archaic Cold War nuclear bomb. Specifically, he should drop his opposition to the cut in funding for the exorbitant and unneeded B61 nuclear bomb Life Extension Program, and make that clear in House-Senate conference. He should, instead, seek to boost funding for programs that really benefit New Mexican children but are facing painful sequester cuts, such as education, medical care and food assistance. And given our state's increasingly crippling drought, Tom Udall could better serve all New Mexicans while sitting on the Senate Energy and Water Subcommittee by expanding water conservation and wildfire prevention programs, instead of favoring the labs through so-called Energy appropriations with increased funding for worse than useless nuclear weapons programs."

#