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OFFICE OF SECRETARY
RULEMAKINGS AND
ADJUDICATIONS STAFF**Comments for the Record**
Jeff Bingaman
U.S. Senator, New Mexico
March 6, 2006

I would like to thank the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for traveling to Hobbs this week to hold this hearing on the National Enrichment Facility. This is an opportunity for New Mexicans to observe and participate in an open and transparent hearing process.

To date, the licensing process before the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and its Atomic Safety Licensing Board has considered a number of difficult issues raised by all parties with an interest in this proceeding. My paramount goals, which I believe are widely shared, are that the National Enrichment Facility operate in a safe and secure manner and that the Facility not leave wastes that future generations of New Mexicans will have to contend with.

I believe that the hearing process has helped to resolve many of the important detailed issues associated with my concerns. In some cases, it has forced a re-examination of certain aspects of how we dispose of low-level radioactive wastes for the nation as a whole. I commend the Commission and the Board for their activities.

I, also, want to thank Governor Richardson for his efforts to reach settlement with the applicant on a number of difficult issues relating to the Enrichment Facility.

Much remains to be done until a license is issued and much will remain to be done after that. I want to emphasize, though, that throughout this process and in the future, I expect all parties to this process to keep the above goals front-and-center as they move forward.

Again, my thanks to the Commission for holding this hearing in Hobbs today.