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What you can do

1. This is a time when we need your financial support.
2. Email this alert to your friends.

Bulletin #91

November 7, 2008

Kansas City update; fall fundraising drive begins

Dear friends and colleagues –

1. "Action Alerts" are now "Bulletins."

As you can see we are trying out a new format for what we used to call "Action Alerts," now "Bulletins." [Let us know](#) if your computer has any problems with this formatting. If you do have trouble, this bulletin will soon be on our [web site](#).

We aim to send out a Bulletin each week, late on Friday or on the weekend.

This is more than a name change. Times have changed. Opportunities for old-style "write-your-congressperson" citizen engagement have declined almost to the vanishing point, though few seem willing to admit it. The idea of an "action alert" seems quaint. Most issues are being decided behind closed doors these days, and it's more common than not for "popular" movements to be initiated in Washington, DC strategy meetings and then "implemented" via a top-down *faux* grass-roots ("Astroturf") campaign. These processes supersede actual citizen engagement.

We have all become accustomed to propaganda. We are trying to avoid it.

There is little to say in a one-size-fits-all format going to thousands of people that could lead to effective citizen responses to nuclear policy issues (or any other national issues) without asking people to invest more time, attention, and treasure than are usually considered reasonable. Reasonable commitments will achieve predictable results at best. Predictable results are by definition nothing new. *Unreasonable* commitments create real change!

2. Brief Kansas City Plant (KCP) update

In Action Alerts [89](#) and [90](#) we described the efforts of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) to consolidate as much as possible of the nuclear weapons complex into New Mexico and West Texas, particularly as those efforts involve KCP. At least for the time being, and at least as far as KCP is concerned, NRDC is joined in this effort by other members of a "Nuclear Weapons Complex Consolidation Network."

On October 8 NRDC, Nuclear Watch of New Mexico (NWNM), Tri-Valley CAREs of Livermore, CA, and some local Kansas City parties filed suit in Washington, DC to hamper construction of a new nuclear weapons component factory in Kansas City, Missouri (good), continuing NRDC/NWNM's 2-year effort to move KCP's functions to New Mexico, where a similar new factory would be needed (bad).

The push for weapons complex consolidation can be likened to an odd full-court press in which one team tries to block the actions of half the players on the opposing squad while assisting the other half. It is not a game-winning idea, to say the least. At a minimum such a strategy is something that should be discussed first with one's teammates, and discussed publicly. The target population – New Mexico in this case – needs to understand what is being planned. This unfortunate situation has created quite a bit of unplanned work for us, but it has been interesting.

We see the negative effects of this “consolidation” approach in the arena of plutonium-related construction in New Mexico, which has been opposed barely if at all by most nuclear issue nonprofits. I have often heard statements like “it’s the compromise we have made,” but mostly there is just an eerie silence. A bipartisan majority in the House that has consistently opposed this facility for five full years; this silence has left the House leaders who have opposed construction of what amounts to step-by-step construction of a modern pit factory largely twisting in the wind.

The main problem appears to be a tight circle of financial and career interests in the “nonprofit industrial complex” and their close overlap with Democratic Party interests and donors, as well as the power of the nuclear weapons complex in the foundation community.

In September three of us traveled to Kansas City for an in-depth site visit, to meet with officials and activists, and to testify before the City Council. The Kansas City Plant (KCP) has been a major subject in our work on Capitol Hill this summer and fall.

In our eyes the above nonprofits and the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) are each about half right. The main missing piece of the puzzle is the complete adequacy of the existing facility, which neither NNSA nor these consolidation-oriented nonprofits have publicly discussed. Meanwhile, moving the plant to Albuquerque would require construction of a very large new factory – about the same size and cost as the one proposed for Kansas City. As far as we can tell, there is absolutely nothing wrong with the existing highly-flexible facility, which received more than \$200 million in major upgrades in recent years.

The Study Group boiled down some of what we’ve learned about current KCP policy options to 4 pages, posted [here](#) (pdf). There is a great deal more coming from us on this issue, so if you are interested please watch this space each week. For example, continued use of the existing facility could open up urgently-needed “green” options for the remaining space, assuming the building remained in the public domain, powerfully enhancing “green-collar” job-creation prospects in the Kansas City area.

If our donors come through (dear donors, that’s a strong hint), the Study Group may soon intervene legally in this situation. If we do so we would be able to supply some of the missing elements. We would provide a voice for New Mexico in this forum and would do our best to make what could be a secret settlement process more transparent.

3. Thanksgiving fundraising drive: we need your help!

All of us here at the Study Group would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to those who have made our work possible through the years.

The election of Barack Obama and other Democrats creates big opportunities. As President-Elect Obama said, the election is not the change we need, just the opportunity to create it. We must seize this opportunity while we have it and do so quickly. Such opportunities are highly perishable. Among other factors, we need money to do this.

Please consider making a contribution today, as well as becoming a sustaining donor by means of a regular monthly contribution.

We don’t just want your money. Political change requires more than that. But money is essential.

You can donate by credit card or by check [electronically](#), by calling our office, or by dropping a check in the mail. Or call us if you would like to make a donation of stock, which may have tax advantages. Others are stepping forward with offers of in-kind services, but we need money to take full advantage of their generosity. We will be heading to Washington during the transition period, and this too costs money.

We are going to keep on asking, by email and for many of you by regular mail as well. If you want more information call our office in Albuquerque at 505-265-1200. It’s up to you to decide how deeply you want to be involved. If you are serious and want to work on these issues, we have or will create a way.

Will you contact your friends for us? Let them know how important this work is and how much we need their support too. Share this email with them and perhaps challenge them to match your contribution.

Also, if you belong to an organization that would be interested in learning more about these issues, or if you would like to host a house party to inform yourself and your friends, the Study Group would be happy to provide a speaker. If you are interested call us at 505-265-1200.

4. More prior work now available on-line.

Some of you will be interested in the following congressional correspondence and related items.

NNSA Weapons Activities spending 1980-2008 (handy chart, updated), Sep 15, 2008

http://lasg.org/Weapons_Activities_spending_1980-2008.pdf

Brief comments on RRW pit reuse report, Sep 5, 2008

http://lasg.org/Pit_reuse_rpt_brief_comments_Sep2008.pdf

Letter to Congress re nuclear appropriations, Part II, May 14, 2008

http://lasg.org/Appropriations_part2.pdf

Letter to Congress re nuclear appropriations, Part I, May 13, 2008

http://lasg.org/Appropriations_part1.pdf

Letter to congressional appropriators: how the Energy and Water budget could be balanced, Dec 3, 2007

http://lasg.org/Ltr_to_appropriators_Dec2007.pdf

Note to Congress re NNSA infrastructure decisions pending, Aug 24, 2007

http://lasg.org/Note_to_Congress_Aug_2007.pdf

Sincerely,

Greg Mello, for the Los Alamos Study Group

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