

The Regents of the University of California

**COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY LABORATORIES**

October 13, 2000

A Special Meeting of the Committee on Oversight of the Department of Energy Laboratories was held on the above date at the J. Robert Oppenheimer Center, Los Alamos National Laboratory, Los Alamos, New Mexico.

Members present: Regents S. Johnson, Leach, Miura, and Montoya

In attendance: Regents Fong and Kozberg, Regents-designate T. Davis, Morrison, and Seymour, Associate Secretary Shaw, General Counsel Holst, Provost King, Mr. Wayne Kennedy, Laboratory Director Browne, and Recording Secretary Bryan

The meeting convened in Open Session at 9:05 a.m. with Chairman of the Board S. Johnson presiding.

1. READING OF NOTICE OF MEETING

For the record, it was confirmed that notice had been given in compliance with the Bylaws and Standing Orders for a Special Meeting of the Committee on Oversight of the Department of Energy Laboratories, for this date and time, for the purpose of briefing Regents on current issues of concern to the laboratory. The Regents were informed that, due to the lack of a quorum, the meeting would be held as a briefing for the Regents present.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

This session was for the purpose of receiving comment pertaining to University-related matters or items on the day's schedule. The following persons addressed the Regents:

- A. Ms. Denise Smith, President of the Los Alamos Commerce and Development Corporation, reported on the economic development of the area and on projects under way, including the Los Alamos Research Park. She praised the partnership that has developed between the laboratory and the public sector.
- B. Mr. Harry Montoya, a member of the Pojoque Valley School Board, thanked the University and the laboratory for their commitment to education and their help in the development of the local public school system's curriculum.
- C. Mr. Leroy Salazar, Vice Chair of the Española Public School Board, stated that the school board strongly supported a continuation of the relationship between the University and the Department of Energy.

- D. Mr. Richard Lucero, Mayor of the City of Española, commented on the city's positive 55-year relationship with the laboratory. He expressed his satisfaction at being a member of a delegation that had visited Secretary of Energy Richardson to express support for continuing University management of the laboratory.
- E. Ms. Susan Musgrave, Executive Director of the Los Alamos Chamber of Commerce, discussed the devastation caused by the recent fire and thanked the University and the laboratory for their help in the community.
- F. Mr. Robert Gibson, a member of the Los Alamos County Council, provided details of the University's and laboratory's supportive efforts to the community in the days immediately following the fire and through the recovery stage.
- G. Mr. Rudy Garcia, representing Santa Fe County Commissioner Marcos Trujillo, reported that the county is pleased with the work that Director Browne has done to promote communication within the community.

Chairman Johnson then turned the gavel over to Regent Leach, Chair of the Committee on Oversight of the Department of Energy Laboratories.

3. **LABORATORY OVERVIEW**

Laboratory Director Browne welcomed the Regents and presented slides showing the areas around the laboratory that were affected by the fire. He discussed the laboratory's mission and provided a status report on its work in the areas of nuclear deterrence and the safety and reliability of the nuclear stockpile. He reported that the laboratory had an operating budget for the fiscal year of about \$1.35 billion and approximately 7,500 University employees and 3,000 contract employees. He noted that the majority of the workforce is women and minorities.

Director Browne commented that one of the laboratory's major challenges is to maintain its scientific excellence while improving its operational excellence. He reported that at the beginning of his tenure as Director he set out goals for operational excellence that included achieving zero instances of safeguards and security violations, environmental incidents, ethics incidents, and incidents involving the mistreatment of employees, and he produced data to show the positive impact of the goals he had set.

Mr. Browne then discussed the aftermath of two security incidents, one involving the downloading of material by physicist Wen Ho Lee and the other involving the loss of some computer hard drives. He reported that, following these incidents, Congress took what he considered to be punitive actions that included cutting the laboratory's budgets for laboratory-directed research and development and for staff travel. It also prohibited visits by individuals from certain foreign countries and directed that a subset of laboratory employees routinely take polygraph tests. The use of polygraphs is a

divisive issue at the laboratory because employees do not understand their value and because there is the danger of producing false positives. He noted that, although employees are not leaving the laboratory in large numbers as a result of the new policy, the establishment of routine polygraph testing will likely damage the laboratory's ability to recruit.

Mr. Browne noted that there have been concerns expressed in the media about the laboratory's treatment of the Asian/Pacific Islander community in Los Alamos. He reported that the laboratory is attentive to these concerns and has determined that the issues are less about treatment and more about opportunities for advancement, which the laboratory is working to enhance. He also discussed the laboratory's achievements in hiring, promoting, and retaining other categories of employees.

Mr. Browne concluded his presentation by discussing the laboratory's efforts to increase long-term research and scientific collaborations with the campuses and its initiatives concerning advanced energy concepts, such as the development of zero-emission carbon dioxide from the burning of coal and of proliferation-resistant fuel systems that could prevent the diversion of plutonium from energy systems in developing countries to nuclear weapons development.

4. **OPERATIONS UPDATE**

Deputy Laboratory Director Burick discussed the laboratory's site planning and development, noting that the laboratory covers 43 square miles and has 2,000 buildings. He reported that nearly half of its facilities are in poor condition. Although the recent fire did not result in the loss of major structures, the erosion it caused will likely have long-term negative effects. He noted that there has been full cooperation among the governmental agencies that are involved in the recovery effort, which will include flood and erosion control, structural rehabilitation, and the purchase of new firefighting equipment.

5. **SECURITY UPDATE, STOCKPILE STEWARDSHIP UPDATE, AND THREAT REDUCTION UPDATE**

At this point, the attendees were divided into two groups. The first group heard classified presentations on security by Division Director Busboom, on stockpile stewardship by Associate Director Younger, and on threat reduction by Associate Director Cobb. The second group heard non-classified presentations on the same topics by Deputy Director Tucker, Deputy Associate Director Mercer-Smith, and Chief of Staff Yates, respectively.

The groups reassembled for lunch at 12:25 p.m., during which there was a presentation by Associate Laboratory Director Meyer on strategic and supporting research. Following lunch, the attendees toured the burned area and then traveled to Española, where they met with a delegation of northern New Mexico business, community, education, and tribal leaders and

elected officials for a general discussion of community relations and laboratory matters and to receive reports by those who had joined the delegation which went to Washington, D.C. to meet with the Secretary of Energy to advocate for continuing the University's management of the laboratory.

The meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Attest:

Associate Secretary