

Friday, May 18, 2012

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Ben Ray Luján of New Mexico’s Third District offered an amendment today to the National Defense Authorization Act, which in response to recent reports, calls for a study about broadening the mission of the National Nuclear Security Administration’s (NNSA) national laboratories. The amendment passed with unanimous support.

“Our national labs provide a tremendous resource that is essential to our efforts to spur innovation and economic development, but multiple reports have called attention to the need to expand the labs’ mission in order to strengthen their capabilities,” Congressman Luján said. “These reports highlight the important gains that can be made--especially in New Mexico where Los Alamos and Sandia laboratories position the state to attract new businesses and jobs as new technologies are developed.”

In the 2009 [Stimson report](#) and the 2012 [National Academy of Science \(NAS\) report](#) , it is recommended that NNSA laboratories transition more fully to a broader national security mission and that a mechanism is put in place to provide multiple national security agencies with an ownership stake in the labs. Both reports warn that this transition is needed in order to maintain the vitality of the science and engineering capabilities at the labs. They also highlight the benefits that such a transition would present, including providing national security agencies with more direct and rapid access to the assets available at the labs.

The 2012 NAS report does not recommend how to achieve this transition, while the Stimson report recommends that the labs be placed under a new agency. The amendment ensures this dialogue will continue by calling for a study of a new governance structure that would achieve the goals recommended in the two reports.

Since coming to Congress, Luján has been an advocate for expanding the mission of the national laboratories and for enhancing their ability to promote economic growth. Earlier this Congress, [Luján introduced legislation](#) to encourage partnerships, known as Cooperative Research and Development Agreements (CRADA), between the national labs and business that can help businesses pursue new ventures and create new jobs.

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