



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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McKinley County Commissioners Support Idea of Uranium Task Force

GALLUP, N.M. — In a packed meeting room, two of the three McKinley County Commissioners voiced support for a Blue Ribbon Uranium Task Force. New Commissioner Billy Moore said he thinks the Task Force “will be beneficial in the long run.” Commission Chair Bill Lee said he was glad to see the community Working Group moving forward with the idea.

Most of those in the room were at the Commission meeting to hear Working Group members Percy Anderson and Janene Yazzie make a presentation on the history of the Uranium Task Force and why it is important to the residents of McKinley County.

Commissioner Moore expressed some initial concern that the Task Force might be too “activist” and not focused enough on educating the Commissioners and the county’s residents on the range of issues associated with the uranium industry’s activities in McKinley County. Janene Yazzie (Diné) told the Commissioners that the Working Group will provide a forum for getting full information on uranium mining, but that “we are from impacted communities.”

“Challenges often are an indicator that there is another avenue to approach the goal,” said Percy Anderson (Diné), contractor with Conservation Voters New Mexico Education Fund. “We have another opportunity based on Commissioner Moore’s concern while recognizing that both he and Commissioner Lee spoke out supporting the idea of the Task Force.”

Tyanne Benallie (Diné), Campaigns Director of the Conservation Voters New Mexico Education Fund, agreed. “We all have a common goal with the Task Force of getting information out to the residents of McKinley County, but we are also addressing the needs of the impacted Indigenous communities in McKinley.”

Residents asked in 2016 for a moratorium on new uranium mining. The Commission finally voted against a moratorium in March 2017, but approved a resolution supporting a Blue Ribbon Uranium Task Force to study uranium development. Since March 2017, there has been a series of meetings to discuss the role of the Task Force and select members.

The community wants the Task Force to gather data on the impacts of both historic uranium mining and proposed new uranium mining on McKinley County public health and the environment, as well as on the economy. The Task Force would conduct public hearings at which county residents could provide their personal stories. The personal information and the data gathered would be interwoven to create a report with recommendations to the McKinley County Commission.

Just ahead of the Board meeting, Representative Patricia Lundstrom (District 9, McKinley & San Juan) sent a letter to the Commissioners supporting creation of the Task Force, saying that information on the impacts of uranium production “is important for all of us to know.”

At the close of the discussion, Percy Anderson asked when the Board might take action. The County Manager responded that County staff would look at the recommendations of the Working Group and planned to respond within a month to the Working Group with their recommendation on how to proceed, which could set up a vote by the Board shortly afterwards.

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Additional Information

- Representative Patricia Lundstrom [Letter Supporting Creation of the Task Force](#)
- [Timeline](#) of Community Effort to Get a Uranium Task Force
- [Draft PowerPoint Presentation](#) to the Commissioners