

## *New Mexico Testimony—Faithful Security*

My name is Jessica Wilbanks. I am the Coordinator of Faithful Security, a multi-faith coalition committed to the elimination of nuclear weapons, and I live in Taos, New Mexico.

Our coalition partners include:

- The General Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Church
- Sojourners/Call to Renewal
- Friends Committee on National Legislation
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- The Episcopal Church
- The Islamic Society of North America
- The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism
- The National Council of Churches
- The Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
- American Baptist Churches, USA

There are many more, but I'll spare you the litany. Suffice to say that all the majority of religious bodies within the United States—all of our partners—are committed to building a world free of nuclear weapons, which are a fundamentally different animal than conventional weapons. Ronald Reagan called nuclear weapons “totally irrational, totally inhumane, good for nothing but killing, possibly destructive of life on earth and civilization.”

Nuclear weapons are now seen as a status symbol—a way for a poor nation to achieve international dominance without conventional forces or alliances with other nations. As long as nuclear weapons exist, countries will want to join the “nuclear club.”

The only way that we can ever come out from under the nuclear shadow is to do what leading experts recommend—partner with other nations to ensure verifiable, multi-lateral disarmament. With today's tensions over the Iranian nuclear energy program, the weaponization of North Korea, and instability in Pakistan, the only way to prevent a nuclear weapon from being used over the long-term is to move toward disarmament.

Two years ago, advocates of disarmament were joined by conservative statesman such as William Perry, Sam Nunn, George Shultz, and Henry Kissinger. With individuals such as these beginning with the premise that a world free of nuclear weapons is possible and desirable, we are well on our way to seeing a world free of nuclear weapons.

Former Senator Sam Nunn rightly refers to the move toward disarmament as the climb to the top of a very tall mountain—maybe we can't even see the summit from where we are now. The disarmament process takes time, money, commitment, and verification. The world's leading experts on nuclear issues have laid out a gradual plan for disarmament that takes all of these concerns into account and ensures security during the disarmament process. We have the know-how—what we need now is the commitment.

And this brings me to today. The Department of Energy has laid out a plan for the transformation of the national laboratories, a plan which centers on the production of new plutonium pits. This multi-billion dollar commitment would be a long-term investment in the business of building nuclear weapons.

My biggest question is, how can the Department of Energy be so short-sighted? You know full well that the next President is required by law to complete a new Nuclear Posture Review in 2009. Today the House is naming the members of a commission tasked with examining the role of nuclear weapons in today's security paradigm.

Last year the administration requested a small sum for the Reliable Replacement Warhead program, only to see it completely zeroed out in both the House and Senate.

Why is the Department of Energy continuing to push forward with a proposal without legs? If Congress refused to fund a paltry sum for the Reliable Replacement Warhead program, then how can we expect Congress to move forward with a dramatic and provocative plan to dramatically ramp-up the manufacturing capacity of the nuclear weapons complex—in the absence of a national dialogue on the role of nuclear weapons?

The political leadership in New Mexico is increasingly on board with mission change. Espanola Mayor Joseph Maestas, Representative Tom Udall, Mayor David Coss—all are known as strong proponents of mission change. They may or may not share my moral conviction that nuclear weapons should never be used—but what they understand are the numbers. Nuclear weapons are a dinosaur industry. They are on the way out. Read the signs.

New Mexico needs to be ahead of the curve. We need to strengthen our economy and save our jobs by transforming our laboratories.

We will not support any Complex Transformation alternative that includes the production of new plutonium pits. Not here. Not now.

How can you come to our community with a proposal that you know full well is not politically or economically sustainable, and will never pass through Congress?

Instead, I speak for some of the nation's largest religious traditions when I tell you that I want to see a proposal for Complex Transformation which includes real mission change, funding for clean-up, and dismantlement.

Thank you.