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## **ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF URANIUM MINE CLEANUP IN NEW MEXICO ADDRESSED IN NEW REPORT**

**ALBUQUERQUE, NM** --- As the 2021 New Mexico Legislative Session begins, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham is focused on economic diversity for the state. A new report from The University of New Mexico Bureau of Business and Economic Research (UNM BBER) provides clear recommendations for a vital new focus on environmental remediation within the Land of Enchantment.

*The Economic Opportunities and Challenges of Uranium Mine Cleanup in New Mexico* report provides a blueprint for how the State has the ability to leverage existing expertise in environmental remediation. This can be accomplished by utilizing our existing resources for economic development and creating a new key industry to address this seemingly insurmountable problem.

The report, viewable at [bber.unm.edu/uranium](http://bber.unm.edu/uranium) presents twelve recommendations to systematically address challenges the State currently faces in tackling uranium mine remediation. They are presented as a logically structured program to promote the cleanup of uranium sites.

“New Mexico needs new ideas for economic development,” said Susan Gordon, coordinator for the Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment. “We have huge environmental contamination problems from the legacy of uranium mining. Hoping for uranium mining jobs to return is not realistic. However, creating a framework to bring together the resources that exist in our higher education institutions and focus them on uranium cleanup, will bring good paying jobs that will last for decades in hard hit areas.”

“New Mexico already has many of the resources needed to tackle this seemingly impossible problem,” said Rose Elizabeth Rohrer, co-author of the report for UNM BBER. “It’s a matter of leveraging those resources correctly and working closely with communities who are most impacted by these legacy mines to generate both economic development and lasting solutions.”

“This report is important for New Mexico and we should move quickly to establish a strategic plan to create a database and coordinate the existing resources in the state,” said Rep Wonda Johnson of Gallup. “The opportunity to create a new industry and provide income is exactly what the Navajo community needs.” Johnson continued, “I grew up near the Kerr McGee mine, this work is important to me, and to my Navajo community who are skilled and talented. They want the chance to join a workforce that allows them to live and raise families in Northwestern New Mexico. This is a great opportunity for our own children.”

Addressing these challenges will require the involvement of all stakeholders; however, the recommendations in the report are specifically designed for State action, as the State of New Mexico sponsored this research project.

In 2019, the New Mexico legislature appropriated funds for fiscal year 2020 to UNM BBER to investigate the potential economic impact of uranium mine cleanup and assess the workforce capacity for conducting the cleanup work. The funding was first proposed by Rep. D. Wonda Johnson. The work was conducted with oversight by the New Mexico Legislature’s Indian Affairs Committee.