

# **WIPP Economic Assistance Assurance Act**

## **Background**

The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), located near Carlsbad, New Mexico, is the nation's only deep geologic repository for the disposal of transuranic waste generated by the United States' nuclear weapons program. Since opening in 1999, WIPP has played a critical role supporting the national defense mission by managing legacy nuclear materials and supporting national security-related cleanup efforts across the Department of Energy.

Communities in southeastern New Mexico have hosted WIPP and the transportation infrastructure that supports the facility for decades. In recognition of this role, Congress included provisions in the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant Land Withdrawal Act of 1992 to provide economic assistance payments to the State of New Mexico and affected local communities. These funds support infrastructure, transportation, emergency preparedness, and other programs necessary to safely host and support WIPP operations.

The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant Land Withdrawal Act provides two authorizations for economic assistance payments. Section 15(a) authorized specific inflation-indexed appropriation levels for an initial 14 fiscal years. Additionally, section 15(b) authorized subsequent appropriations at levels based on Congressional discretion. Though WIPP operations are expected to continue for decades, subsequent appropriations have been inconsistent—leaving New Mexico communities to carry the cost of maintaining this operational infrastructure.

This bipartisan bill assures sustained, inflation-adjusted federal assistance for New Mexico communities to maintain vital infrastructure for the duration of WIPP's operation.

## **What it Does**

The **WIPP Economic Assistance Assurance Act of 2026** updates the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant Land Withdrawal Act to ensure that the original authorization level for economic assistance remains in place for as long as WIPP remains operational. The bill would achieve this by:

- Extending the Sec. 15(a) authorization beyond the original 14-year statutory limit through the year in which waste shipments to or from WIPP are terminated.

## **Endorsers**

The bill is endorsed by:

- Southeast New Mexico College
- United Steelworkers Local 12-9477
- City of Carlsbad, New Mexico
- City of Hobbs, New Mexico