

Udall pushes to expand tech transfer at DOE labs

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Intention: To build NM's economy

ALBUQUERQUE — U.S. Senator Tom Udall hosted U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee Vice Chairwoman Barbara A. Mikulski, D-MD, and U.S. Department of Energy Acting Director of the Office of Technology Transitions Jetta Wong at Sandia National Lab for a roundtable discussion about improving technology transfer and creating jobs Oct. 14.

Sandia and Los Alamos National Lab officials joined several local businesses that were created based on technology developed at the labs to discuss ways to expand tech transfer and build New Mexico's economy. Udall is leading the push to expand DOE's capacity for tech transfer and plans to reintroduce legislation this fall that will incorporate suggestions made by the participants in the roundtable.

Businesses that shared their experience with the tech transfer process included HTMicro, Abbott Medical Optics, Flow Science, UbiQD, Aquila Technologies and mPower Technology. While DOE's tech transfer process has helped build the foundation for their businesses, many said that there are still shortfalls in the agency's ability to form public-private partnerships to spin-off innovative technologies. New tools and resources for tech transfer would help new businesses emerge and existing companies expand, creating more jobs and growing the economy.

"Expanding technology transfer so that innovations built at our national labs can move into the marketplace will create new jobs in New Mexico, grow our economy and broaden access to ideas that improve our everyday lives," Udall said, a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee. "I was proud to welcome Sen. Mikulski and Acting Director Wong to Sandia today to hear from local entrepreneurs who have built successful businesses based on lab technology. From Abbott's eye care products to network security pioneered at Aquila, the businesses we heard from are advancing their industries right here in New Mexico. We had a productive discussion, and I'm looking forward to incorporating some of their ideas into my bill to expand tech transfer."

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“Technology transfer is essential to making sure that America’s economy thrives and succeeds,” said Mikulski, Vice Chairwoman of the Senate Appropriations Committee and the Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations Subcommittee that funds our national laboratories. “As Vice Chairwoman, I’m looking out for the long-range needs of the nation, and I believe that science and innovation are the keys to what keep our economy moving and our country great. With the knowledge of our nation’s federal laboratories and the know-how of America’s private sector, we are supporting our innovation economy – creating jobs today and jobs tomorrow. I’m proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with Sen. Tom Udall on the Senate Appropriations Committee, fighting to make our nation safer and our economy stronger.”

Udall first introduced his bill to improve DOE’s technology transfer process - the Accelerating Technology Transfer to Advance Innovation for the Nation Act – in 2014. He plans to update and reintroduce the bill this year to increase public-private partnerships, measure progress at DOE, and expand startup funding in underserved areas.

Udall has also successfully pushed to pass several key tech transfer reforms as part of large appropriations and policy bills. The measures include a provision signed into law last year that requires DOE to prioritize spending on energy technology commercialization. He also supported the creation of DOE’s Office of Technology Transitions and worked with Senator Heinrich on a provision in this year’s National Defense Authorization Act that would increase the maximum percentage each laboratory director may set aside for Laboratory Directed Research and Development from 5 percent to 7 percent.