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Fed shutdown slows nuclear arsenal upgrade efforts

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So it turns out there is a silver lining to the shambles of the Tea Party fiasco forced shut down of the U.S. government. And it goes well beyond two weeks of multiple media examples of vital (and now missing) federal government programs. And it goes beyond the well deserved marginalization of the Republican Party. And it goes ever beyond raising up President Obama and the Affordable Health Care Act in public polls.

It turns out that the shutdown and pressured cutbacks in federal spending are achieve what long time peace activists have failed to achieve: cuts to the rapid growth of the U.S. nuclear arsenals -- and upgrades within the arsenals. Nobel Prize winner Obama has pushed the funding of nuclear upgrades to win favor from anti-disarmament Republicans who have opposed any arms control deals with the Russians. Nuclear disarmament has long been held hostage to some of the same folks who have now shut down the U.S. government.

For a better understanding this is what Staff Writer John Fleck wrote Saturday in the *Albuquerque Journal*.

Ironically, the congressional gridlock could soon accomplish what arms control activists have repeatedly failed to do, curbing the rapid growth of the U.S. nuclear weapons budget. The result could force the labs and the National Nuclear Security Administration to seriously consider steps nuclear weapons opponents have long advocated, including less emphasis on large nuclear weapon design and remanufacturing projects and multi-billion dollar buildings to do the work, said Greg Mello of the Albuquerque-based Los Alamos Study Group. "They're going to have to change their paradigm," Mello said.

While Friday's bill, part of a House Republican strategy to reopen the government one agency at a time,

appears to be dead in the Senate, similar approaches to settling the spending arguments have already won general support from both Republicans and Democrats in both houses of Congress. The cuts, if they go into effect, would wipe out budget increases pushed by the Obama administration, often with congressional objection, as part of a bargain to win support for a 2010 arms control deal with the Russians.

Members of Congress and the Obama administration have in recent years overridden the budget autopilot and protected the weapons program from the cuts sweeping the federal government, allowing steady increases in recent years to fund what defense officials say are needed upgrades to our nuclear arsenal, and the laboratory infrastructure and personnel needed to carry out the work.

A similar intervention now would be needed to prevent the cuts. But the administration and Congress have shown little willingness to support continued increases this time around, said Tom Collina, research director at the Arms Control Association, a Washington, D.C., think tank.

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