

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF PHIL HARRISON
Before
RADIOACTIVE & HAZARDOUS MATERIALS COMMITTEE
GALLUP, NEW MEXICO
SEPTEMBER 20, 2021

My name is Phil Harrison and it is a privilege to come before the committee to talk about the plight of former uranium workers and Downwinders of the designated counties of Arizona. I am originally from Cove, Arizona and grew up where the legacy of uranium mining took place from 1950's to 1966. In addition, I am a former underground uranium worker and worked as Remediation worker at DOE site in Tuba City, AZ. At the present time, I am the lead consultant and played a key role in drafting proposed changes to Radiation Exposure Compensation Act program.

My relatives and my father all went to worked mining uranium not knowing how dangerous it was and no specific warning. No one knew the deadly consequences of working in the extreme conditions with exposure to radioactive ore, no ventilation or proper safety equipment. My father worked over 20 years and died at age 44 years old from lung cancer.

Around 1970's majority of the men gotten very sick and many have died from serious lung disease, various cancers and families members were being diagnosed with same symptoms as their fathers. The impacted communities never experience sickness prior to the introduction of America's industrialization. In my community of Cove and Red Valley, Arizona we have a lost approximately 400 plus former uranium workers. Many families are struggling dealing with their lost and still grieving.

In 1978 the Red Valley Chapter organized a grassroots committee titled "Navajo Uranium Radiation Victims Committee" to fight for Justice and seek reparations. The NURVC made strikes and helped to establish the first compensation program with federal government in October of 1990 and amended July 2000 to include other categories of radiation victims. The federal government offer an apology and develop a stringent- criteria for compensation.

After 32 years there is not sufficient time to provide a relief for claimants to adequately receive their compensation. This would provide an opportunity to educate and explain why extreme disparities exist among claimants of US Department of Justice and US Department of Labor. There are some flaws in the law in both federal entities and there is need to make improvement to provide a fair decision among victims applying for compensation.

At the present time many former uranium workers and Downwinders are deceased. The office of Navajo Uranium Workers Program under the Navajo Nation has been assisting uranium workers and Downwinders to file their respective claims. Early this year the office recorded some stats as we have lost about 500 miners, 400 compensated, 610 denied, and 365 Downwinders compensated. The office has recorded 540 post 1971 uranium workers.

The Navajo uranium workers are struggling to file their claims and evidence is not readily available to prove merits to their claims. The uranium worker or families need to pay for work history, research of exposure and pay for their Chest X Ray interpretations. The Downwinders had to prove "Proof of Residency" in designated counties of Arizona when they don't own their land. The diagnosed of cancer had to be primary cancer not a medical disorder. The medical treatment and monitoring are cumbersome and often travel hundreds of miles to visit a clinic.

To further add damages the amount of compensation is very small and do not recover their potential lost of income over the years. I have made comments asking congress to visit the compensation rate verses the 911 Compensation Fund establish without any further discussion in Washington, DC. The hearing was in Albuquerque, NM hosted by former Senator Tom Udall.

For example, a former 1st responder filed a claim with VCF with Fibrosis of Lung and received \$883,000. The uranium workers receive \$100,000. There again how RECA Law and the federal compensation is delaying true Justice for many uranium and Downwinders.

In conclusion, the process is difficult and time is of the essence. We are losing former uranium workers every week and many of them are depended on oxygen, hospitalize, assisted living, and families are struggling to care for them. We are very thankful for medical benefits as they are eligible for in home free home care. The Downwinders are NOT eligible for home care. The proposed changes In RECA Law 2000 will include medical benefits for Downwinders. We are praying the US Congress will amend RECA Law 2000 soon. Thank You.

Respectfully submitted,



Phil Harrison, Consultant

Navajo Uranium Radiation Victims Committee, est., 1970's
PO Box 661
Shiprock, New Mexico 87420