



**POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE
RADIATION EXPOSURE COMPENSATION ACT
(RECA) AMENDMENTS
ON THE HEALTH OF THE PEOPLE
OF NEW MEXICO**



Bringing Restorative Justice to the Peoples of New Mexico...after 70 years.

The Tularosa Basin Downwinders Consortium (TBDC), founded in 2005 by Tina Cordova and the late Fred Tyler, has been working for over 13 years to bring attention to the negative health effects from the radioactive fallout that resulted from the 1945 Trinity test.



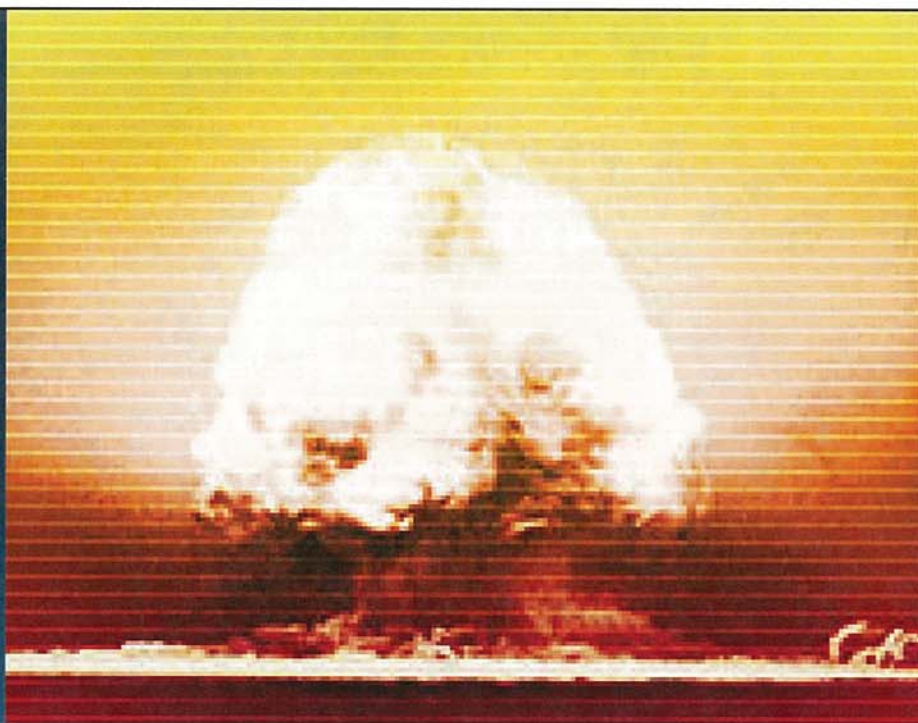
TBDC has, for many years, partnered in this endeavor with Joni Arends of Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety (CCNS), Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) and the Cold War Patriots, Rev. Holly Beaumont of Interfaith Worker Justice-New Mexico (IWJ-NM), Dr. Myrriah Gomez, Assistant Professor at UNM .

It is our goal to utilize the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) to bring Restorative Justice to the peoples of New Mexico through the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act Amendments (RECA).



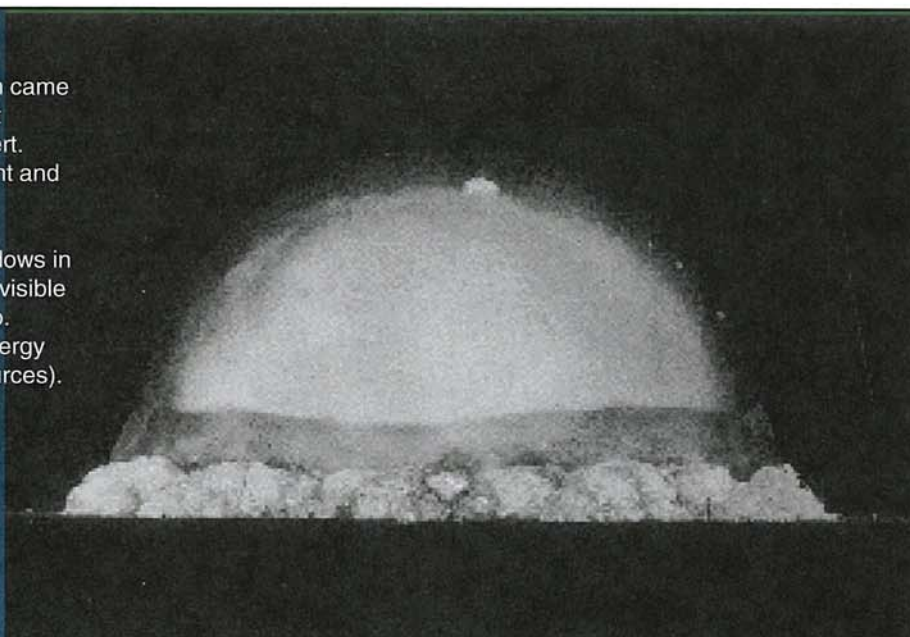
On July 16, 1945,
the first plutonium-
based atomic device
was detonated at
Trinity site in southern
New Mexico.

At precisely 5:29 AM
the Nuclear Age
began...



Seconds after the explosion came
a huge blast wave and heat
searing out across the desert.
The test produced more light and
heat than the sun.

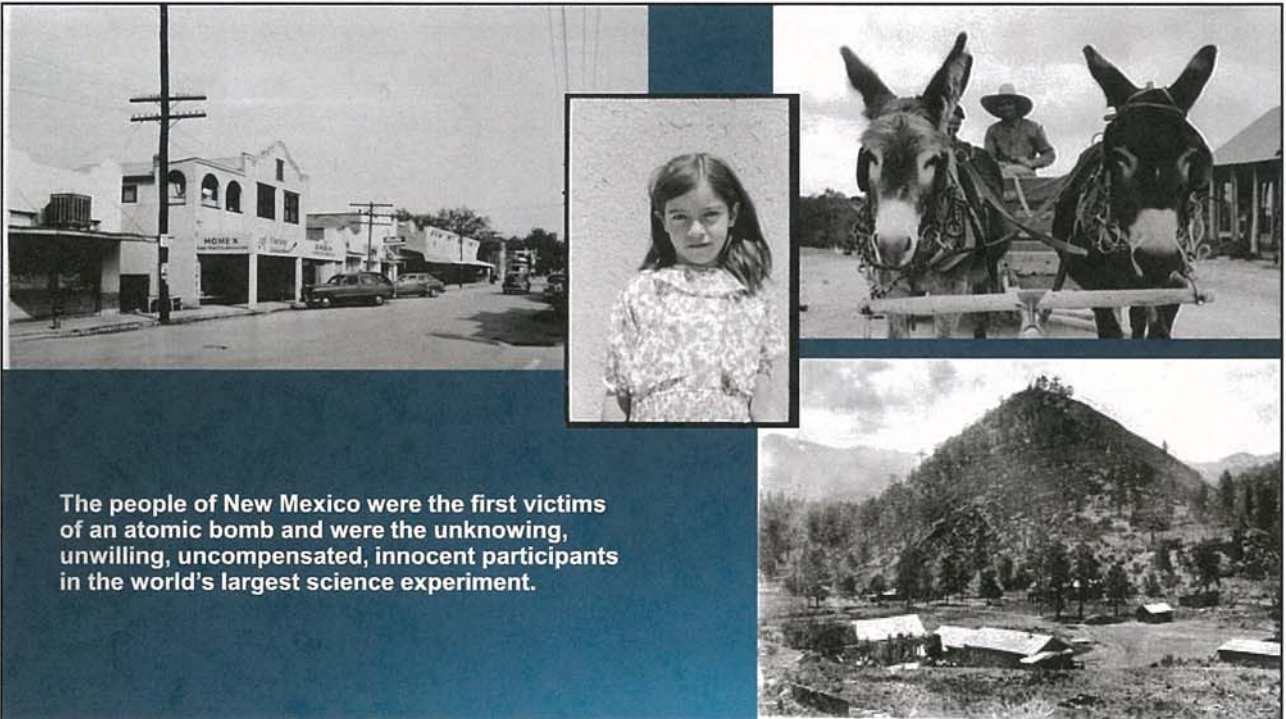
The blast, which broke windows in
Gallup and Silver City, was visible
in Albuquerque and El Paso.
(from the Department of Energy
History and Heritage Resources).



The first 0.11 seconds of the
nuclear age, Trinity, July 16, 1945.

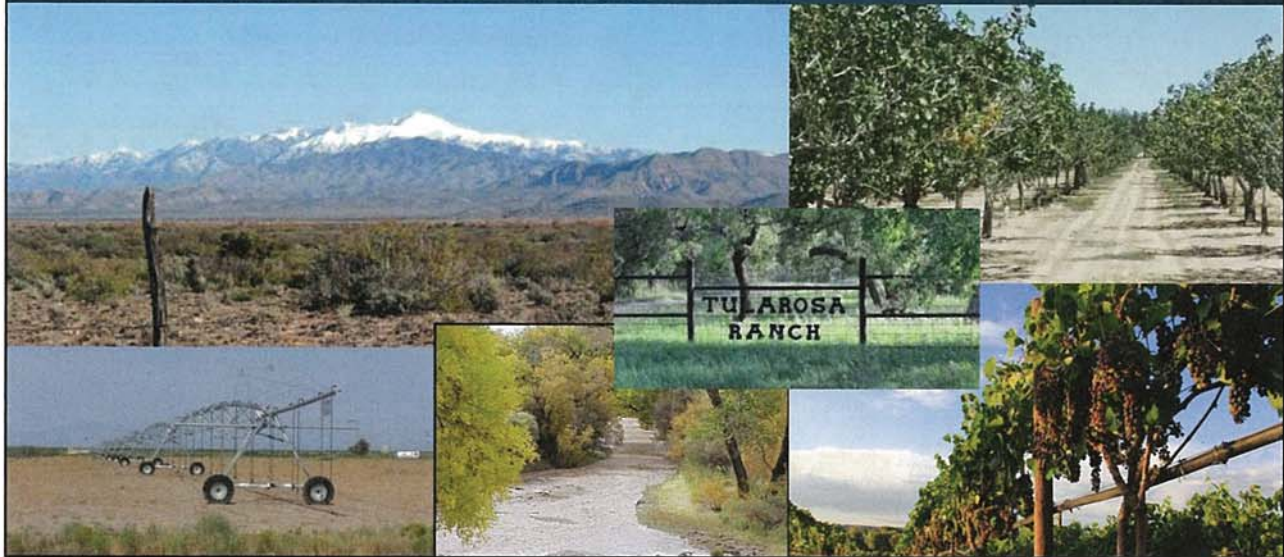
The US Government described the area chosen for the Trinity test as “remote” and “uninhabited” but we know from the census data of that time period that there were tens of thousands of people living in a 50 mile radius to the test site and some people lived as close as 12 miles.

To maintain secrecy the government did not attempt to evacuate or warn the people living near the site nor were they examined to determine internal radiation doses from inhaling contaminated air and ingesting contaminated food and water.



The people of New Mexico were the first victims of an atomic bomb and were the unknowing, unwilling, uncompensated, innocent participants in the world's largest science experiment.

During the Trinity test only 2.6 pounds of the total 13.2 pounds of plutonium was fissioned: the remaining 10.6 pounds were dispersed into the environment blanketing the many farms and ranches where people their own food, milked cows and collected rainwater in cisterns for drinking.



"There's a misconception that when the Trinity test took place in 1945 the four counties surrounding the test site were sparsely populated. In fact, the census data shows that there were tens of thousands of people living within a 60-mile radius.

The radiation exposure subsequent to Trinity was significant for the people and has continued since then."

--Tina Cordova is shown in this photo with her mother holding a photo of Tina's father ----- who died at the age of 71 after battling three different cancers over 12 years. The second photo includes Tina's dad holding her little brother and the head of a deer that he hunted to provide venison for his family.



Quote from Margie Guilez Trujillo current mayor of Tularosa as told to Senator Udall:

I can tell you that cancer not only destroys the person who suffers from it, but it affects the entire family. You never truly recover from the effects of cancer, you can go into remission, but your health is never the same.

Financially, a person's savings go up in smoke even if you are lucky enough to have insurance.

You refinance your house, you sell anything that has any value, you dip into your retirement, or you go into debt by maxing out credit cards. You do all this simply to keep a loved one alive and be able to afford the poisons that are pumped into us.

Your family deprives themselves from so many things that we take for granted just to provide some small comfort for the sick family member.

You can only imagine what it is like for the cancer patient to watch their family struggling to make ends meet and the suffering they endure. I don't have to imagine it, this was my life. There were days that I wished this disease would just take me so I could bring some relief to my family.

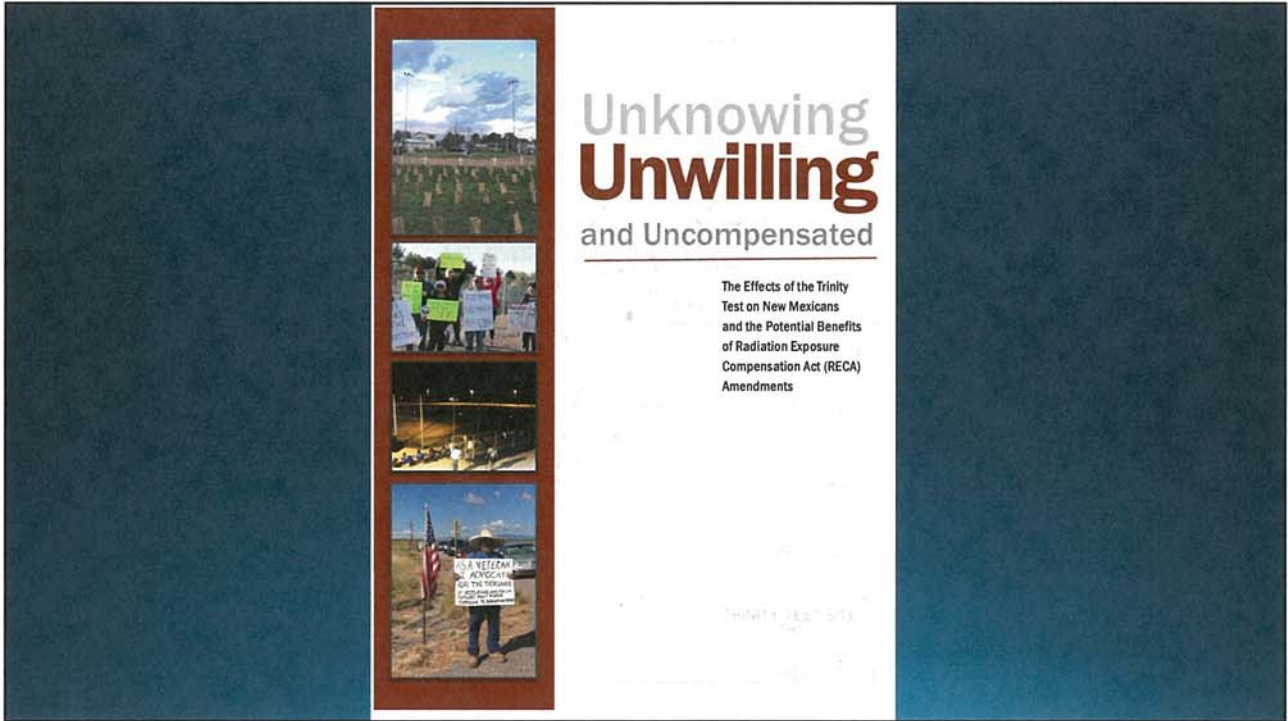
WHY THE HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT WAS SO IMPORTANT

In 1990, the US Government set up a fund called the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) to compensate people who were made sick living downwind from the Nevada Nuclear Test Site. The fund has been available for people in parts of Nevada, Utah, Idaho and Colorado... but not in New Mexico.

RECA covers some New Mexico uranium miners in some parts of the state – but only people who worked in and around the mines prior to 1971, and only for certain forms of cancer.

New Mexico downwinders have never been included in this fund although the people of New Mexico were the very first downwinders.

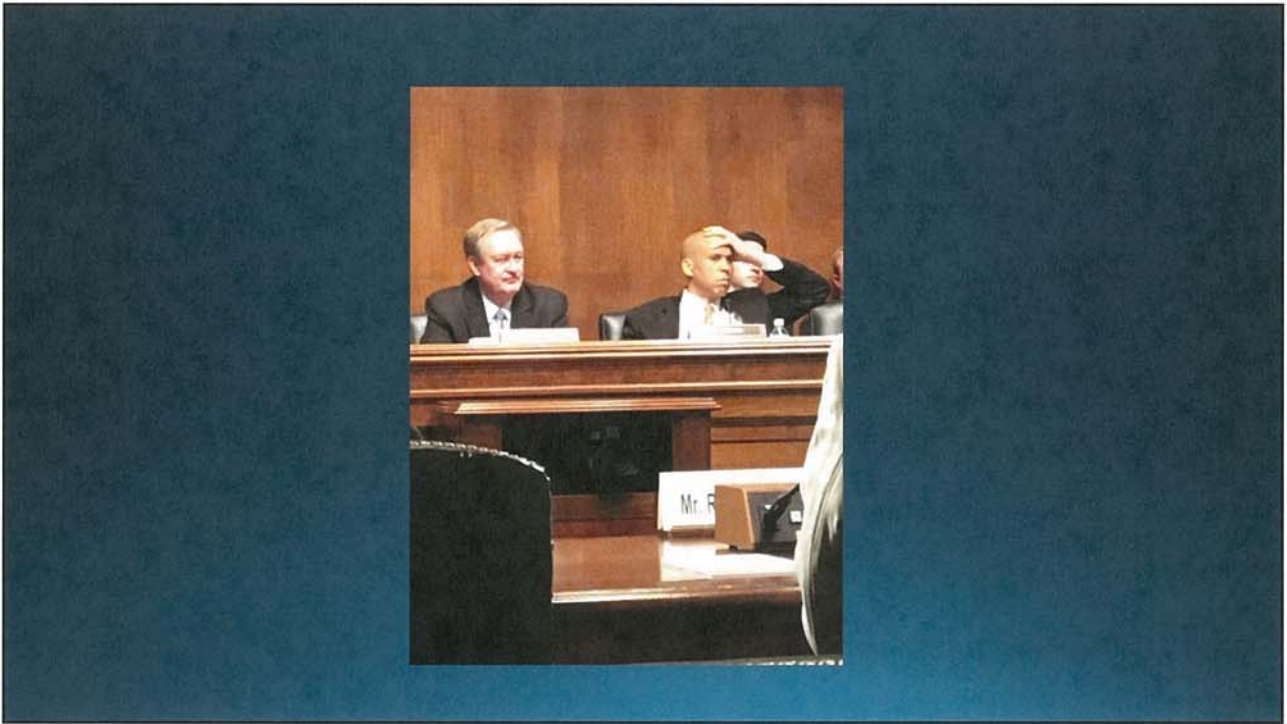
The fund has paid out over \$2 .3 billion in claims and provides invaluable health care coverage to the "Downwinders" of the Nevada test site and others.



HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT STAKEHOLDERS-POLICY MAKERS:

- Members of the New Mexico State Legislature
- New Mexico Members of the US House and Senate
- *All Members of the US House and Senate
- *Governor of New Mexico
- *New Mexico Tribal and Pueblo Leaders
- * Local City and County Governments







The Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) has paid out more than 2.3 billion dollars in claims since 1990.
We want the same compensation not a dime more not a dime less.
The health care that is available as part of the program is the best that is available anywhere.
The people of New Mexico deserve to be treated fairly.

Through our work on the HIA in collecting health surveys and holding meetings etc. we've determined that a certain percentage of Downwinders and Post 71 Uranium miners utilize Medicaid to access health care. Their stories are all quite similar. They have to travel away from home for care and treatment. They can no longer work. They exhaust all their resources. They rely on Medicaid for their treatment.

What is the potential NEGATIVE economic impact for New Mexico in absorbing the Downwinders and the post 71 Uranium Miners into the economy.

Imagine what it might mean for New Mexico if these people were treated like Downwinders from other States and were shifted to the RECA program and off the State Medicaid Program.

The TBDC has taken information about
Medicaid expenditures in the State of
New Mexico from:

"Report of the Legislative Finance
Committee to the Fifty-Third
Legislature," dated May 2018 for Fiscal
Year 2019 "Second Session, Post-
Session Review."

Specifically Appendix G

WHAT WE FOUND IS THIS:

THE FY19 GENERAL FUND
APPROPRIATION FOR THE
MEDICAID PROGRAM TOTALED
\$933.6 MILLION,

OR 2 PERCENT ABOVE FY18,
INCLUDING \$15.1 MILLION FOR
MEDICAID ADMINISTRATION, UP
6.2 PERCENT FROM FY18.

If 1 percent of the FY19 general fund appropriation for the Medicaid program was shifted to RECA, the State would reduce its Medicaid by **\$9.33 million**.

If 3 percent of the FY19 general fund appropriation for the Medicaid program was shifted to RECA, the State would reduce its Medicaid by **\$28 million**.

If 10 percent of the FY19 general fund appropriation for the Medicaid program was shifted to RECA, the State would reduce its Medicaid by **\$93.3 million** –

or about the amount of additional general fund support needed in FY20 –

What can the New Mexico State Legislature do to support the efforts of the TBDC:

1) Pass bi-partisan resolutions in the next Legislative Session in both houses in support of our work.

2) Write bi-partisan letters to the US Senate Judiciary Committee from the leaders of the New Mexico State Legislature expressing support in moving Senate Bill S.B.197 to the Senate floor for a vote.

3) Write bi-partisan letters to the US House Judiciary Committee from the leaders of the New Mexico State Legislature expressing support for a hearing to be held as soon as possible to consider passage of House Bill H.R. 2049.

Furthermore the TBDC supports the provisions for and asks the New Mexico State Legislature to support :

- Including New Mexico as a Downwind State and an “affected area”;**
- Medical benefits in the same manner and to the same extent as an individual eligible to receive medical benefits under section 3629 of the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA); and**
- \$150,000 in a lump sum apology payment**

The proposed amendments in S.B. 197 and H.R. 2049 are not sufficient.

The TBDC further proposes the following recommendations to the 2017 Amendments to RECA and requests the support of the New Mexico State Legislature:

- Apologizing to the residents of New Mexico;
- Removing the 30-day limited eligibility period (June 30, 1945, and ending on July 31, 1945) and creating an open-ended eligibility period for the Trinity Downwinders;

- Removing the July 9, 2022, legislative sunset provision and extend the sunset provision to at least July 9, 2045;
- Striking the termination of the RECA Trust Fund in 22 years and extending it until 2045; and
- Providing recurrent annual funding for the RECA Trust Fund

The TBDC wants to thank the members of the Radioactive and Hazardous Materials Committee and Senator Steinborn for the opportunity to present today.

Questions?

For More information
please go to
www.trinitydownwinders.com

