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HOUSE MEMORIAL 40

53RD LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2017

INTRODUCED BY

D. Wonda Johnson and Eliseo Lee Alcon

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE NEW MEXICO CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT AMENDMENTS TO EXPAND COMPENSATION UNDER THE FEDERAL RADIATION EXPOSURE COMPENSATION ACT FOR INDIVIDUALS EXPOSED TO RADIATION.

WHEREAS, from 1945 to 1962, the United States government implemented a massive program of conducting hundreds of atmospheric nuclear weapons development tests; and

WHEREAS, to provide uranium for the atmospheric nuclear testing being carried out, the United States undertook uranium mining and processing in many areas, especially in New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Montana, Nevada and Utah; and

WHEREAS, individuals in New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Montana, Nevada, Utah and elsewhere were hired to work in the uranium mines and in uranium processing; and

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1 WHEREAS, large uranium deposits were found on or near the
2 Navajo Nation, and many Navajo people were employed to work in
3 the mines; and

4 WHEREAS, many thousands of individuals have been exposed
5 to radiation in large doses through atmospheric nuclear weapons
6 testing or through employment in uranium mining and processing;
7 and

8 WHEREAS, radiation exposure has been linked to a number of
9 serious illnesses in exposed individuals, including cancers;
10 gastrointestinal, neurological and blood disorders; and other
11 conditions leading to the debilitation or death of individuals
12 exposed to radiation; and

13 WHEREAS, in 1990, the United States congress passed the
14 Radiation Exposure Compensation Act; and

15 WHEREAS, the federal Radiation Exposure Compensation Act
16 was designed to provide some compensation to those exposed to
17 radiation through certain atmospheric nuclear weapons tests and
18 uranium mining and processing operations; and

19 WHEREAS, the federal Radiation Exposure Compensation Act
20 designated certain areas of Arizona and Utah that were deemed
21 to have been downwind of atmospheric nuclear weapons testing as
22 official downwind areas for which compensation would be
23 provided; and

24 WHEREAS, the federal Radiation Exposure Compensation Act
25 limited compensation for uranium miners, millers and haulers to

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1 those workers whom the uranium industry employed before January
2 1, 1972; and

3 WHEREAS, the amount of monetary compensation awarded
4 pursuant to the federal Radiation Exposure Compensation Act
5 widely differs according to whether an individual was exposed
6 due to being in a downwind area or according to the type of
7 uranium industry-related work the individual performed; and

8 WHEREAS, under the strict guidelines of the Radiation
9 Exposure Compensation Act, many individuals who have lived
10 downwind from test sites outside of Arizona, Nevada and Utah or
11 who worked in the uranium industry have been left with no
12 remedy for their radiation exposure; and

13 WHEREAS, in 2013, United States Representative Ben R.
14 Lujan introduced House Resolution 1645, and in 2015, United
15 States Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich signed on to
16 Senate Bill 331 to extend compensation to uranium workers who
17 were exposed from 1972 to 1990; and

18 WHEREAS, House Resolution 1645 and Senate Bill 331 also
19 proposed expanding the list of eligible workers to include
20 uranium core drillers, in addition to uranium miners, millers
21 and ore transporters, as employees potentially eligible for
22 federal Radiation Exposure Compensation Act compensation; and

23 WHEREAS, House Resolution 1645 and Senate Bill 331 would
24 have added to the list of downwind areas in New Mexico,
25 Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada and Utah, as well as

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1 in the United States territory of Guam; and

2 WHEREAS, House Resolution 1645 and Senate Bill 331 would
3 have made all qualifying claims eligible for one hundred fifty
4 thousand dollars (\$150,000) of compensation, regardless of
5 whether the claimants were exposed as miners, millers, ore
6 transporters, on-site employees or individuals living in a
7 downwind area; and

8 WHEREAS, House Resolution 1645 and Senate Bill 331 would
9 have expanded the types of medical conditions that render
10 claimants eligible for compensation pursuant to the federal
11 Radiation Exposure Compensation Act; and

12 WHEREAS, members of New Mexico's congressional delegation
13 are continuing their previous efforts to expand and improve
14 compensation for individuals exposed to radiation; and

15 WHEREAS, on January 24, 2017, United States Senate Bill
16 197, a bill to amend the federal Radiation Exposure
17 Compensation Act to improve compensation for workers involved
18 in uranium mining, and for other purposes, was introduced; and

19 WHEREAS, Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich
20 cosponsored the bill;

21 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
22 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the New Mexico
23 congressional delegation be requested to continue to support
24 proposed federal legislation to expand and improve compensation
25 under the federal Radiation Exposure Compensation Act; and

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1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
2 transmitted to members of the New Mexico congressional
3 delegation.

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