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SENATE MEMORIAL 67

52ND LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2016

INTRODUCED BY

Howie C. Morales

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE NEW MEXICO CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION 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

WHEREAS, large uranium deposits were found on or near the

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1 Navajo Nation, and many Navajo people were employed to work in
2 the mines; and

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

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

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

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

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

23 WHEREAS, the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act limited
24 compensation for uranium miners, millers and haulers to those
25 workers whom the uranium industry employed before January 1,

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1 1972; and

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

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

12 WHEREAS, United States Representative Ben R. Lujan
13 introduced House Bill 994, which was then cosponsored by United
14 States Representatives Michelle Lujan Grisham and Steve Pearce,
15 and United States Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich have
16 cosponsored Senate Bill 331, both of which would extend
17 compensation to uranium workers who were exposed from 1972 to
18 1990; and

19 WHEREAS, House Bill 994 and Senate Bill 331 also expand
20 the list of eligible workers to include uranium core drillers,
21 in addition to uranium miners, millers and ore transporters, as
22 employees potentially eligible for Radiation Exposure
23 Compensation Act compensation; and

24 WHEREAS, House Bill 994 and Senate Bill 331 would add to
25 the list of downwind areas in New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado,

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1 Idaho, Montana, Nevada and Utah, as well as in the United
2 States territory of Guam; and

3 WHEREAS, House Bill 994 and Senate Bill 331 would make all
4 qualifying claims eligible for one hundred fifty thousand
5 dollars (\$150,000) of compensation, regardless of whether the
6 claimants were exposed as miners, millers, ore transporters,
7 on-site employees or individuals living in a downwind area; and

8 WHEREAS, House Bill 994 and Senate Bill 331 would expand
9 the types of medical conditions rendering claimants eligible
10 for Radiation Exposure Compensation Act compensation;

11 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE
12 OF NEW MEXICO that the New Mexico congressional delegation be
13 requested to support the provisions of United States House Bill
14 994 and United States Senate Bill 331; and

15 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that United States Representatives
16 Ben R. Lujan, Michelle Lujan Grisham and Steve Pearce and
17 United States Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich be
18 congratulated for their vision in cosponsoring legislation to
19 expand, under the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act, the
20 rights of individuals exposed to radiation; and

21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
22 transmitted to members of the New Mexico congressional
23 delegation.