



The Navajo Nation

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Navajo President Buu Nygren urges passage of U.S. Sen. Hawley's RECA amendments to expand benefits for former uranium miners

WASHINGTON – Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren continued his advocacy here this week for the adoption of crucial amendments to the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act.

"Our people have borne the cost of America's nuclear program in their health and well-being," President Nygren said. "The amendments we advocate for today are not merely legislative changes, they are affirmations of justice and a commitment to heal the wounds of the past."

On Tuesday, the President met with former Navajo uranium miners and members of Congress to urge passage of the amendments before RECA expires on June 10.

Two bills are before Congress. One supported by the Navajo Nation is sponsored by Missouri Republican Sen. Josh Hawley. It would expand RECA benefits to allow residents of the Navajo Nation, Utah, Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico and Guam who were sickened by radiation from nuclear weapons testing and development to apply for compensation.

The other sponsored by Utah Republican Sen. Mike Lee would extend RECA for two more years but not provide expanded compensation.

It is well documented that throughout the Cold War the Navajo Nation was disproportionately impacted by uranium mining. That led to severe health problems, disease and environmental degradation that persists today.



Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren and Navajo Nation Council Speaker Crystalyne Curley continued their advocacy in Washington this week for the adoption of amendments to the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act. Advocating with them were Navajo uranium miner advocates Leslie Begay Jr, Rose Harrison and Phil Harrison.

RECA, passed in the 1990s, inadequately addresses the breadth of conditions and communities affected by radiation exposure which left many Navajo families without recourse or compensation.

The proposed amendments to extend RECA's coverage would include post-1971 uranium miners, recognize additional diseases such as chronic lymphocytic leukemia and chronic kidney illnesses,

and improve the claims process. That would make compensation more accessible for Navajo claimants.

Navajo Nation Council Speaker Crystalyne Curley said the Hawley amendments are pivotal to correct the long-standing injustice to secure equitable compensation for all affected individuals.

Justin Ahasteen, executive director of the Navajo Nation Washington Office, also called on Congress to act swiftly.

"Time is running out," Ahasteen said. "Every day without these amendments means another day without justice for our people. We urge Congress to stand on the right side of history and pass these crucial amendments."

The urgency for Congress to act cannot be overstated, he said.

"The Navajo Nation calls for immediate passage of S. 3853 –The Radiation Exposure Compensation Reauthorization Act," he said. "This is to ensure that justice is no longer delayed for the Navajo people and other affected communities."

The Navajo delegation's advocacy is supported by bipartisan leaders like Sen. Hawley, U.S. Sen Ben Ray Lujan of New Mexico, New Mexico Rep. Teresa Leger-Fernandez, Arizona Reps. Paul Gosar and Eli Crane, and U.S. Sen. Mike Crapo of Idaho.

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