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February 26, 2024

Dear Republican Colleagues:

I write to bring to your attention the critical importance of reauthorizing the *Radiation Exposure Compensation Act* (RECA), **which is set to expire this spring**. We owe it to our constituents who have been exposed to government-caused radiation to extend and update this program as soon as possible. The government lied to our constituents time and again about their exposure to nuclear radiation. This legislation is the least the government can do to put right this historic wrong.

First enacted in 1990 with the support of the late Senator Orrin Hatch and President George H.W. Bush, RECA is a compensation program for Americans who were unknowingly exposed to radiation during the Manhattan Project and later Cold War testing programs. Uranium mines were staffed by workers who were often given no safety equipment. Processing sites for nuclear material were situated too close to populated areas. Nuclear waste was improperly stored: at one site in Missouri, the government discarded nuclear waste in leaky barrels in the open air, later contaminating a local creek where thousands of children played over decades. Many of those children now have cancer. Tens of thousands of other Americans were exposed to radiation “downwind” from over 100 atmospheric tests in western States. In most cases, nobody was warned of this danger. In others, the government simply lied. Repeatedly.

RECA is an effort to make this right. The law on the books acknowledges that these Americans “were subjected to increased risk of injury and disease to serve the national security interests of the United States.” To date, RECA has compensated 40,000 Americans who developed cancers through a claims process run by the Department of Justice. It has been updated on several occasions. But there are still Americans waiting to have their claims processed. And many affected Americans—miners in Texas and Wyoming, downwinders in Idaho and Utah, residents near test sites or processing facilities in Tennessee, Alaska, Kentucky, and Missouri—have been left out. We must change this now.

It is our duty to reauthorize and update RECA this spring. I emphasize that this is not a welfare program. It is a matter of basic justice for those the government poisoned. We’ve developed the most advanced nuclear weapons on earth, but we cannot forget the working people of this country who were sacrificed for it. If we can send hundreds of billions of dollars in security assistance to foreign nations, we can spend a fraction of that on our own constituents who deserve help.

I ask for your support to reauthorize the life-saving RECA program. I want to thank Senator Crapo for his years of leadership on this issue. Our reauthorization bill passed the Senate last summer with a strong bipartisan vote, and I am grateful for much support from our Conference. Now we must finish the job. **There are RECA claimants in every state, including each of yours.** They will benefit if this bill is passed. Simply put, this is the right thing to do.

Sincerely,



Josh Hawley  
United States Senator