

December 6, 2021

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

The Post '71 Uranium Workers Committee in Grants, New Mexico is asking for your support on the RECA Amendments, (Radiation Exposure Compensation Act), H.B. 5338. The post '71 uranium workers were exposed to high levels of radiation from working in uranium mines and mills with no personal protection or information of the effects of exposure to radiation. These uranium workers are patriots, veterans of foreign wars, family orientated, loyal Americans that love this country. Currently, no one that worked in uranium after December 31, 1971 is included in the compensation program.

The Federal Government has said that these workers are not included in the current compensation program because the Federal Government was no longer the sole purchaser of the yellowcake being produced at the end of 1971. While that is true, the other truths that need to be noted are that the government still purchased a certain amount of yellowcake at that time, and the Federal government, then and now, is the sole responsible entity for worker safety. That means that the Federal government still has an obligation to the post '71 uranium workers. The Post '71 Uranium Workers Committee gathered information from the post '71 uranium workers through an informal, voluntary survey in 2007 and again in 2009. Within the information gathered from the uranium workers on the surveys were questions concerning working conditions and any health issues the workers currently have. There is plenty of information on the post '71 uranium workers and the complete results from the surveys are available.

The workers stated many times on the surveys that they were aware when OSHA was coming for inspections weeks before the inspectors arrived. The mine supervisors were instructed to close off dangerous stopes and high radiation areas before the mine inspector arrived, so the mine would pass the inspection. Many mill workers stated that they never saw the inspectors get out of the truck as they rode around the mill site on inspection tours. When the inspectors left, and the company had passed inspections, the dangerous, high radiation areas were re-opened, and workers were sent back in to go to work once again. The surveys also contained numerous reports of protective equipment not being provided, dosimeters, (radiation detection badges), installed in hard hats that were never collected and reported on, mandatory safety meetings were held with no mention of radiation as a work place danger,

no clean lunch areas were provided for meals, no drinkable water was provided at work sites, showers with no hot water was provided in dirty locker rooms, and no medical treatment was available for workers that were exposed to high levels of radiation. According to the surveys, the standard treatment for over exposure to high levels of radiation was to move the impacted employee to an area deemed to have low levels of radiation for a week or so until the workers system was “cleaned out” of radiation.

There are many, many safety violations mentioned in the surveys and even some of the past safety inspectors have submitted violations of safety regulations in their testimonies. The surveys show that after the uranium boom was over in 1985, a large population of the uranium workers returned to their home states. The surveys show that 23 states have impacted uranium workers that worked in the mines and mills from the Grants, N.M. area.

There is another issue with the assumed number of workers that need to be compensated. The numbers that have been estimated by the government are highly inflated and there does not seem to be any way to verify those inflated numbers. According to NIOSH, (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health), there are an estimated 100,000 workers that could possibly be compensated. To date, no one can find out where that number came from, and NIOSH has not been able to produce actual numbers for the Post '71 uranium workers. The rough estimate from Southwest Research and Information Center is that there could be 35,000 to 40,000 workers that need to be compensated, and they estimate that up to 20% of those workers will not meet the strict RECA guidelines needed to qualify to file a claim. For instance, many uranium workers worked for cash, so they have no way to establish employment, the first requirement for filing a RECA claim.

Another fact that should be addressed is that the workers were told every day that they were doing their part for the Cold War effort even though the rest of the world thought the United States was downsizing nuclear weapons. The uranium industry used every available tool to get the workers to produce yellowcake as fast as they could for the sake of company profit and in doing so, ignored worker safety.

One more truth that needs to be addressed is that other groups of uranium impacted people are already receiving compensation. Employees from Hanford, Washington, Paducah, Kentucky, and Rocky

Flats, Colorado are already being compensated for their exposure to radiation during the manufacturing process of uranium products for the government. These people were working with the yellowcake that the post '71 uranium workers produced to make their uranium products. The reclamation workers that were brought in to attempt to clean up the old mine and mill sites are already being compensated. The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant site in southeastern New Mexico had a container leak that exposed workers to low levels of radiation recently. Those workers were supplied with protective equipment of the highest quality and were removed from the site as soon as the leak was found. These workers are already receiving medical compensation for their exposure.

Every uranium worker that worked before 1972, and everyone that worked after 1985 and later are being compensated for their over exposure to radiation. There does not seem to be any logical reason not to compensate the post '71 uranium workers yet they are sick and dying at an alarming rate without medical care or compensation. These uranium workers are patriot citizens and deserve to be treated as such by being cared for by the country they gave their lives for. It is past time for the United States of America to show these uranium workers how important their sacrifices were to home and country by including them in the RECA program.

Thank you,

[Linda Evers](#)

Linda Evers, V.P. & Legislative Spokesperson

Post '71 Uranium Workers Committee

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