

December 6, 2021

Dear Judiciary Committee Chair and Members:

We are writing to express our support of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) Amendments of 2021, S.2798/H.R.5338.

We have conducted several studies which focused on American Indian and non-Indian uranium underground and above ground miners, millworkers, and truck haulers. These workers were employed in the Southwestern United States during the period of the late 1940s through the 1980s. We interviewed over four hundred respondents, the results of which appeared in peer-reviewed publications and congressional testimonies. Our research was utilized in the passage of RECA in 1990 and 2000.

RECA and its amendments only covers uranium workers and survivors up to 1971. In addition to our earlier work, we interviewed post-1970 uranium workers, a large group of whom were women. The illnesses attributed to uranium exposures of these workers were similar to those who have been compensated through RECA. It is important to recognize that, because of Affirmative Action programs, large numbers of women were employed only in the uranium industry after 1970. However, the post-1970 workers, including men and women, have been ineligible for RECA, leaving them the financial burden associated with any uranium-related occupational illnesses.

The financial and psychosocial impacts of compensation for uranium workers and their survivors are incalculable. We interviewed many workers and widows of uranium workers who told us how, prior to RECA, they were financially devastated and could not find other sources of assistance. Workers with occupational illnesses, in general, do not receive compensation compared to those with occupational injuries. The issue of latency exposures, often 20-30 years, makes it difficult to prove causation. RECA therefore has been a lifeline to these workers and their families. Without it, many would have been destitute.

It is important that RECA be extended after 2022 and also expanded to include the post-1970 uranium workers in the proposed legislation. We thank you for your consideration. Please contact us if you have further questions.

Very truly yours,

Susan E. Dawson, Ph.D.
Professor Emerita of Social Work
and Social Policy
Utah State University
[REDACTED]

Gary E. Madsen, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus of Sociology
Utah State University
[REDACTED]