

December 6, 2021

Re: H.R. 5338 – 117th Congress: Radiation Exposure Compensation (RECA) Act Amendments of 2021

Dear Chairman Congressman Nadler and Judiciary members,

Please repair, extend and expand the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) of 1990. While I support HR5338, there is a dire need for **amendments** to the bill language.

I am imploring for amendments to RECA to improve the bill in markup. My dear late Uncle Vic Juhola was an Atomic Veteran who was exposed by the 21 kiloton Shot Dog during the Buster Jangle series in 1951. Neither he nor his spouse was ever compensated for this violence done to him, which resulted in his sterility and the multiple cancers that took his life. I teach at Oregon State University where my historical research involves working with radiation-exposed communities from Uranium Miners to Atomic Veterans.

We must have your help to support Atomic and Cleanup Veterans in Oregon and others, all over our nation, who have been harmed by radiation exposure during their selfless, patriotic service. RECA covers some of the many people across the country who were exposed to radiation from nuclear testing and uranium mining. But the program is very limited and is set to expire in July 2022 unless Congress takes action. In Oregon, we have both Uranium Miners and Atomic Veterans who will be harmed if RECA is allowed to expire. Problematically, a few key groups are **not** included in the legislation, due to an error and this is especially harming the second-generation clean-up Veterans.

It is with great despair I see other Atomic Veterans and their families may not get the care they deserve due to an earlier clerical error or oversight in the current RECA legislation HR5338. RECA is the least bureaucratic and most efficient program to help Atomic Veterans. Our member experience is if a claimant fills out the paperwork properly, the claim is resolved on average in six to twelve months. Our experience with the Veterans Administration (VA) is a successful claim on average takes instead, ten to fourteen years. This is the difference between having a home and medical care, versus homelessness and death on the streets for many of these Veterans. This impacts families of a deceased Atomic Veteran, too, because families also have no recompense from the VA after death but can file for RECA.

We strongly urge you to include ALL Atomic and Cleanup Veterans. We request the following amendments to HR5338:

Addition or inclusion of the;

• ***Enewetak Atoll Radiological Clean-up Project personnel (Veterans and Civilians).*** Note: This group was included in the RECA House bill versions in the 115th and 116th sessions. One example is Paul Laird, featured in the American Legion. He was part of the Enewetak clean-up project. He contracted and recovered from six unique cancers, losing his battle to the sixth cancer. Paul never had a successful claim. Upon Paul's passing the family had to sell their home and move. His spouse/family is not eligible for DIC. You have the power to improve this type of dire travesty from an error that keeps being repeated over and over in legislation that has hurt too many Atomic Veterans and their families already.

• ***1966 Palomares clean-up personnel.***

• ***Amchitka Island (in the Aleutian Island chain in southwest Alaska) testing personnel and downwinders.***

Please also correct an administrative issue with the current and future RECA program. Currently, the RECA program sunsets on July 10, 2022. The trust fund and last date to file a claim terminate on the same day. This creates a possibility for a timely claim to be made and upon processing, no funds to pay the claim. For this reason, we recommend the Trust fund terminate at least three years after last date to file a timely claim.

Thank you for your attention to repairing this very important RECA legislation.

Sincerely, Dr. Linda Marie Richards, [REDACTED]