

March, 23, 2021

To the U.S. House of Representatives Judiciary Committee/ Constitution,
Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties

Dear Committee Members,

I am a lifelong resident of Salt Lake City. I am also a downwinder, a long-time advocate and a journalist and playwright who has written extensively about the effects of radioactive fallout. Like so many Utahns who lived under the clouds of fallout during the years of above ground nuclear testing, I developed cancer. I have counted 54 people in my childhood neighborhood in Salt Lake City– including 4 members of my own family – who have developed various cancers or autoimmune diseases. I have been radiated, sliced and scooped out. Luckily, I am a survivor, despite losing my thyroid to cancer in my early 20s and later my ability to have a child. My older sister died in her 40s, leaving three children behind. Another sister is battling a rare cancer and my youngest sister has autoimmune disorders. The genetic damage they suffered is now surfacing in their children – a 32- year-old niece with breast cancer, two other nieces with debilitating immune disorders.

Government studies have shown for years how far the winds spread fallout beyond the red rocks of Southern Utah. The attached map, based on government data, traces where fallout went. Yet, only 10 counties in Southern Utah are currently covered under the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act. People like me, my sisters, my neighbors and thousands of other northern Utahns as well as downwinders in Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, and Colorado are not included.

We are still living with the effects of fallout. We are still losing neighbors, friends and family members. People are still getting sick, other health complications are surfacing, our cancers are returning, our immune systems compromised. We are still struggling to pay medical bills, still coping with the devastating loss of loved ones. Last month, we lost Preston J. Truman, a man who fought for decades to expand compensation, to his second bout of cancer. Time for justice is literally running out, as compensation itself is set to expire in July of 2022.

There is no question that four decades of nuclear weapons testing had devastating health consequences for Americans. Our government knew from the beginning that those tests harmed people and it lied to us. We were the expendable casualties of the Cold War. Congress now has the opportunity – and responsibility -- to take care of the unwitting veterans of a war we never enlisted in. Downwinders have waited too long for justice. Too many have already died. I urge you to support the expansion of RECA to include more downwinders in western states who were the collateral damage of radioactive fallout.

I invite you to listen to the brief remarks I made at the conference, “Still Here: 75 Years of Shared Nuclear Legacy.”

<https://youtu.be/TlgV6mpHxDw>

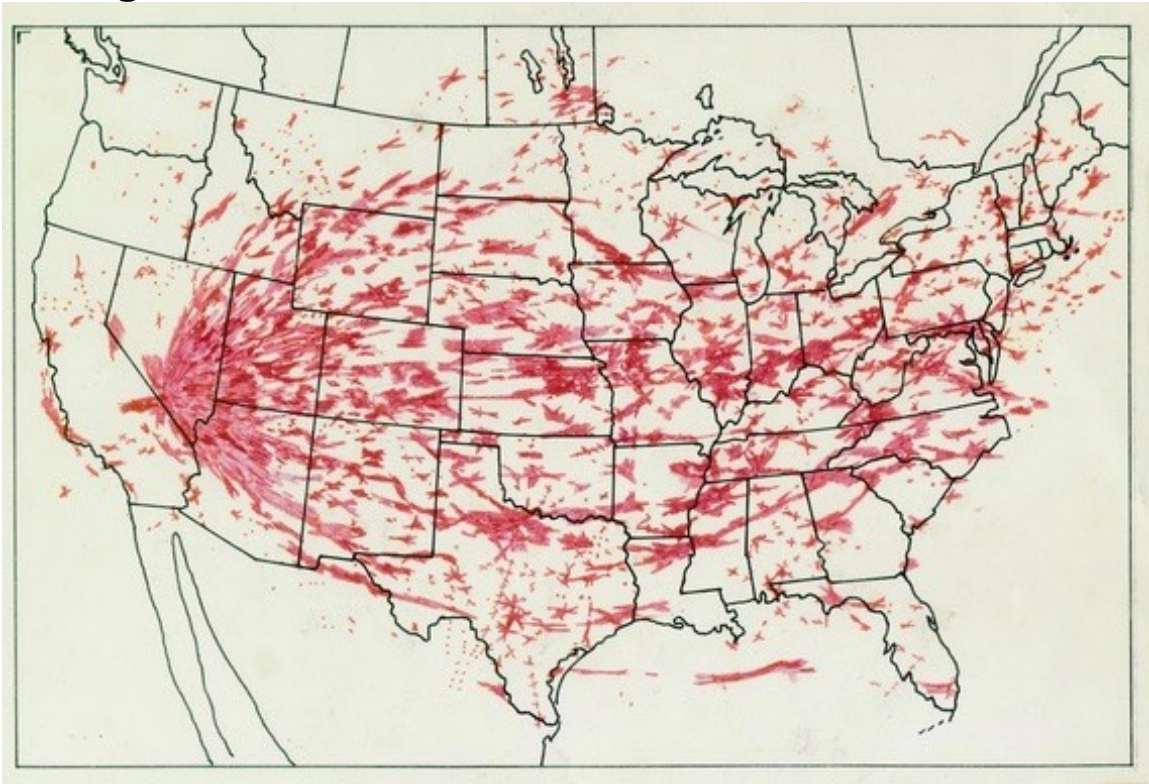
They provide background which I believe is important to share with you. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mary Dickson



Areas Crossed by Three or More Nuclear Clouds from Atmospheric Testing 1951-1962.



From **Under the Cloud: The Decades of Nuclear Testing** by Richard R. Miller, based on data from the Atomic Energy Commission, Nuclear Defense Agency and the U.S. Weather Service.