

Written Statement of Jean Bishop, Supervisor District 4, Mohave County Board of Supervisors

**United States House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary
Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties
Legislative Hearing on Examining the Need to Expand Eligibility Under the Radiation Exposure
Compensation Act**

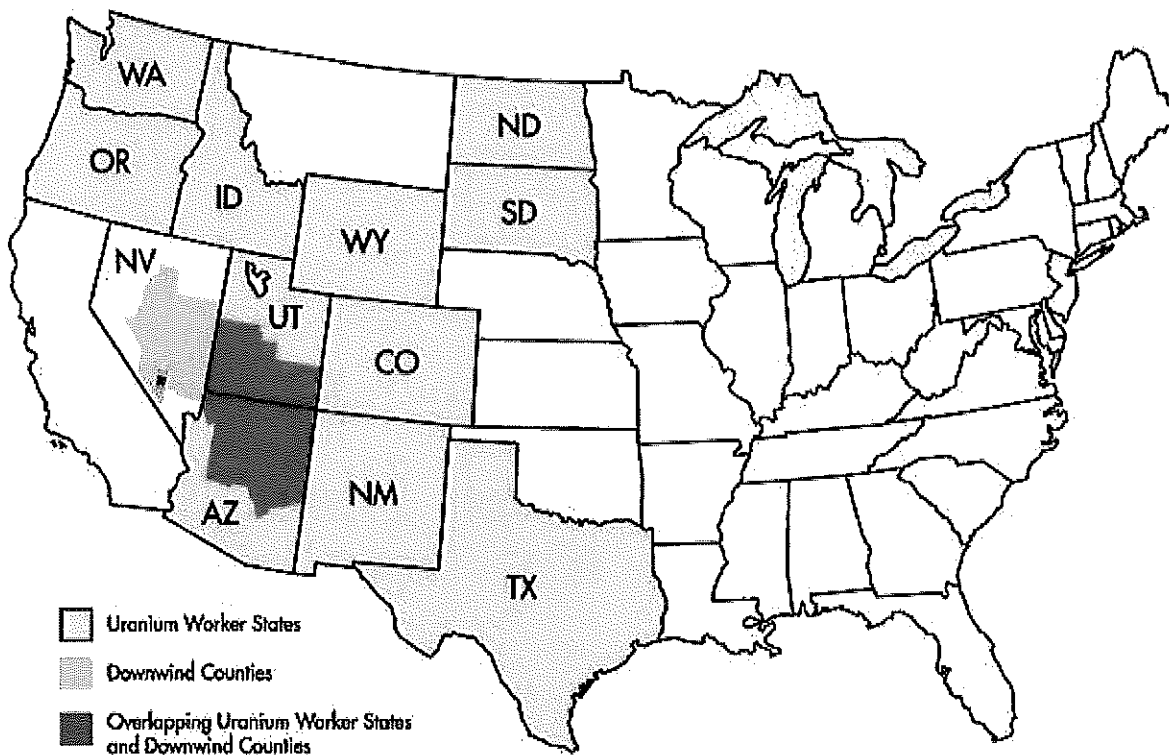
March 24, 2021 – 2:00 P.M.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. I am Jean Bishop, Supervisor District 4 of the Mohave County Board of Supervisors for Mohave County, Arizona. My testimony is unique in that my statements are on behalf of the citizens of Mohave County and also individually as both my family and I have been impacted by the nuclear testing conducted at the Nevada Proving Grounds.

For years the Arizona Congressional Delegation has supported legislation that would amend the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) to recognize the many Mohave County residents that worked and lived downwind from nuclear testing sites and were adversely affected by the radiation exposure generated by the above ground nuclear weapons testing that occurred in Las Vegas, Nevada. In addition, the Mohave County Board of Supervisors has adopted 5 different resolutions supporting federal legislation and requesting amendments to the radiation exposure screening and education program. Copies of the resolutions and a certification from the County's Clerk of the Board have been included as part of my packet.

With the pending expiration, and hopefully renewal, of RECA now would be the perfect time to amend the boundaries of the covered area and include all of Mohave County which, coincidentally, is a neighboring County located to the east of Las Vegas, Nevada. Please note that Arizona Counties further east and southeast of the testing site were included in the RECA Covered Areas when a portion of adjacent Mohave County was overlooked. As a point of reference please review the following map <https://www.justice.gov/civil/common/reca> supporting this statement:

RECA COVERED AREAS



In 2005, Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano commissioned a study from the Arizona Radiation Regulatory Agency Regarding the Exposure of Citizens in Mohave County to Fallout from the Testing of Nuclear Weapons at the Nevada Test Site (Study)¹. Communications from the Governor to Speaker James P. Weiers noted that ***“an inequity for a county that experienced greater exposures from the radioactive iodine that was released by the prior nuclear testing than other areas that were compensated by the RECA such as Gila and Yavapai Counties [emphasis added].”*** Additional findings concluded that the Rads per individual to the thyroid in Mohave County were in some cases three times higher than those found in other Arizona counties that are in the RECA Covered Area. Finally, the report determined:

“Clearly, since Congress has made the decision that compassionate payments are appropriate for certain areas of Arizona, it is an inequity to not provide the same payments in areas with the same or higher risk (i.e. exposure) as those that are being compensated. In the case of Mohave County, the entire County should be included for compassionate payments under the provisions of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act.”

A copy of the Study and communication from Governor Napolitano are included as part of my packet.

Personal Perspective

I was just a baby when atomic explosions filled the sky near my family home outside of Las Vegas, Nevada. It was in the early 50's when my family lived downwind from the government nuclear test sites and then later moved to Mohave County. A personal letter to the Committee is included as part of my packet of information.

Between 1951, my birth year, and 1963 the United States Government through the Atomic Energy Commission detonated hundreds of nuclear bombs near our home in the Nevada desert. It was a matter of National Security as the United States just ended WWII by dropping 2 bombs on Japan. The U.S. and U.S.S.R. had just entered into the cold war and began a race to create the biggest nuclear bomb, but this race was also a matter of unacknowledged risk at the expense of the public. Over and over my parents were told the testing was safe as our family stood on the front porch and watched in horror as the sky was filled with dust. While, at the time, we were encouraged to celebrate the advances of our government finding methods to protect U.S. citizens; unfortunately, we were blind to the fact that the radioactive fallout would kill and sicken numerous members of our family. Regrettably the radioactive fallout not only impacted our family but families for hundreds of miles surrounding the test site.

My immediate family members that were impacted include: oldest sister Judy died of brain cancer in 1968, I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2013; my sister was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2014 and my husband was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 1998. At last count 32 people of my husband's family have died from various types of cancer. Currently his younger sister is in her final days fighting stage 4 colon cancer

My husband worked on the family's cattle ranch during the testing period and watched the clouds move from the test site, downwind and across the sparsely populated areas. Everyone on the ranch was given radiation detectors by the government to wear on their clothes to measure radioactivity. They thought they were being patriotic and helping their country; unfortunately, they were never provided with the results of those measurements.

¹ Arizona State Library, azmemory.azlibrary.gov; Arizona Radiation Regulatory Agency: *Report to Governor Janet Napolitano Regarding the Exposure of Citizens in Mohave County to Fallout From the Testing of Nuclear Weapons at the Nevada Test Site*. March 10, 2005.

Congress created a Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA), a program that would provide partial restitution to individuals who developed illnesses after this radiation exposure. I am certain committee members are aware that the act STILL does not include part of Clark County, immediately adjacent to the testing site, and the southern part of Mohave County which is directly downwind, even though the cancer rates are much higher in these areas. RECA has also included Counties that are further east and southeast of both Mohave and Clark Counties.

Honorable Chairman and Subcommittee Members for emphasis, on my next point, I requested my staff to take the RECA covered map from the Department of Justice's web site to show you what, I believe, will demonstrate the illogical determination to deny parts of Mohave and Clark Counties from RECA coverage.

- If we can all focus on the states of Nevada, Utah and Arizona, the testing site is designated by the yellow square in Nevada.
- The light blue color designates the designated Downwind Counties
- The green color designates Overlapping Uranium Worker States and Downwind Counties
- The southeastern corner of Nevada is not covered even though it is closer in distance to the testing site than a large portion of the covered areas.
- Let's focus now on the northwestern border of Arizona – this is where Mohave County lies and while the northern part of the County is covered the majority of the County is not.

My question to the committee is - How could have this radioactive fallout been so precise to miss portions of both Clark County, Nevada, and Mohave County, Arizona, two neighboring counties, yet previous determinations found that counties located further east in Arizona were more substantially impacted by the nuclear testing.

In conclusion, I would like to take a moment to liken a current time event, namely the Coronavirus Pandemic and the nuclear testing that occurred at the Nevada test site. The velocity of a sneeze according to a study conducted by Lydia "Bourouiba, a fluid dynamics scientist at MIT" found that "a fine mist of mucus and saliva can burst from a person's mouth at nearly a hundred miles an hour and travel as far as 27 feet². Comparatively let's talk about the velocity of the extensive nuclear testing that occurred in the State of Nevada - tests that ranged from 1-49-kiltons of atmospheric tests and generated fire balls, mushroom clouds and even leveled structures. According to previous determinations the radioactive fallout from these tests traveled hundreds of miles extending to the eastern border of Arizona but missed part of the two neighboring Counties - Clark County, Nevada, and Mohave County, Arizona.

Mr. Chairman and Subcommittee Members I respectfully request that you extend RECA and expand the covered area to include all of Clark County and Mohave County.

² Gibbens, Sarah. National Geographics. *See how a sneeze can launch germs much farther than 6 feet.* April 17, 2020.