

**Statement of Congressman Greg Stanton**  
**House Judiciary Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties Subcommittee**  
**Member Testimony**  
**March 24, 2021**

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Chairman Cohen, Ranking Member Johnson and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak about an important issue that impacts the lives of tens of thousands of people in my home state of Arizona.

For far too long residents across northwestern Arizona have been forgotten and victimized by the federal government. In fact, today's hearing is the first time in more than **two decades** that many Arizonans—known as Downwinders—have even had the opportunity to be heard in the House.

I am hopeful that, because of your support and leadership, today's hearing will be a much-needed turning point in the decades-long pursuit of justice for Downwinders who have suffered for the sake of our national security.

Let me provide a little background.

From 1945 to 1992, as a part of our nation's Cold War deterrence efforts, the federal government conducted more than one thousand [1,054] atomic weapons development tests. Nearly all of them were detonated at the former Atomic Energy Commission Nevada Test Site, which is about 160 miles northwest of Kingman, Arizona.

Of the tests at the Nevada site, 100 were atmospheric tests, which means they detonated above ground and created far-reaching nuclear fallout. The largest atmospheric test yielded an energy force equivalent to 74-thousand metric tons of TNT—to put that into perspective, that is **five times greater** than the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Visually, those tests were about **150 times greater** than the port explosion we all saw in Beirut last year. [[Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)]

The sheer sight of these tests were a marvel to behold, and there's a reason I want you to think about the visual here: As you will hear from one of the witnesses today, families would gather together or have “bomb parties” where they would stand on their front porches with neighbors or ride on horseback out into their fields and watch the big, orange mushroom clouds in the distance. They had no idea – and they were never told – that they were being exposed to dangerous, cancer-causing radiation.

As a direct result of the radiation exposure from these tests, thousands of Arizonans have suffered from cancer – entire families have suffered from cancer – and far too many have died.

In an attempt to compensate some families who were hurt, Congress created a program through the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act to provide partial restitution.

But affected residents living in two of the closest counties to the east of the test site – Mohave County, Arizona and Clark County, Nevada – were not included in the original designated “affected area” to receive compensation.

For these families, it is a cruel injustice that ignores the reality they have lived with for decades.

National Cancer Institute research shows that lower Mohave County and lower Clark County have even higher rates of radiation exposure compared to other parts of the country already covered under RECA. And the Arizona Department of Health Services reports that Mohave County had one of the highest average cancer rates in the state from 1999 to 2001.

As a member of this committee, I have worked tirelessly to right this historic wrong and to advocate on behalf of these Arizonans. My office heard an outpouring of stories from families and loved ones that highlight the impact nuclear testing has had on their lives.

Matt Capalby, a third-generation Mohave County resident, told me his father was a county doctor for nearly 40 years. Growing up there, everyone thought it was normal for adults to be diagnosed with cancer in their 30s and 40s.

Danielle Stephens, a lifelong Mohave County resident, told us that 32 members of her extended family have been diagnosed with cancer, and that nearly 20 of them died of cancer before reaching 55.

These are the stories of family after family after family in Mohave County.

Time is running out for these Americans. It’s long past time for the federal government to take responsibility for its actions. It’s time for Congress to take a hard look at the boundaries created under RECA so that those living in Mohave County and Clark County can finally receive justice they deserve.

Thank you again, Chairman Nadler, Chairman Cohen and Ranking Member Johnson for holding this hearing and allowing me the opportunity to share these stories with the subcommittee.