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Budget and Finance Committee endorses New Mexico H.R. 1645 to amend the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act

WINDOW ROCK – On Tuesday, the Budget and Finance Committee approved Legislation No. 0114-14, seeking the Navajo Nation’s support of New Mexico House Resolution 1645. The bill aims to amend the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act, which would improve compensation to former uranium mining workers in the state of New Mexico.

Historically, the Navajo Nation uranium resources were mined by outside companies that did not warn or provide safety measures to the tribe regarding the dangerous side effects from mining the harmful mineral.

In support of the act, BFC vice chair Council Delegate Jonathan Nez (Shonto, Navajo Mountain, Oljato, Ts’ah Bii Kin) urged committee members to endorse H.R. 1645 to remind the people that former Navajo uranium mine workers are not forgotten.

“As lawmakers for the Navajo Nation, it is our responsibility to continue advocating for past miners suffering from diseases and ailments caused by the uranium, they deserve the best that we can offer on their behalf,” said Delegate Nez following the meeting.

Speaker Pro Tem LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland) said H.R. 1645 serves as another step forward in providing improved compensation to former uranium miners.

“I support this house resolution because former miners continue to suffer from the detrimental consequences of uranium mining,” said Pro Tem Bates. “It has caused long-term health problems and substantial emotional damage to the affected individuals and their families who observe their loved ones suffering in sickness, and sadly, in death.”

At the conclusion of the discussion, BFC members unanimously passed Legislation No. 0114-14 with a vote of 3-0.

The legislation was first considered by the Resources and Development Committee on June 3, which referred it to the BFC with a “do pass” recommendation with no amendments.

The legislation now moves forward to the Naabik’iyáti’ Committee for consideration, and has final authority on the legislation.

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