



THE NAVAJO NATION

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President Begaye Supports Congressman Grijalva's Bill to put a Moratorium on Uranium Mining in Grand Canyon

FLAGSTAFF—"I support the Greater Grand Canyon Heritage National Monument Act for one simple reason: it prevents uranium mining on the lands selected to be part of the Monument," President Russell Begaye said during a press conference introducing the bill.

Arizona 3rd District Congressman Raul Grijalva introduced The Greater Grand Canyon Heritage National Monument bill on Monday, Oct. 12 at a press conference held at the Museum of Northern Arizona Easton's Collection Center.

A significant focus of the bill is to put a permanent moratorium on new uranium mining claims in the Grand Canyon region. The bill would stop lawsuits that try to overturn a temporary moratorium.

The bill also promotes a collaborative relationship between the tribes involved in the development, implementation and oversight of a management plan for a national monument.

"Sometimes when proclamations are made under the Antiquities Act regarding something as large as the Grand Canyon, tribes are put in the backseat," said Congressman Grijalva. "This bill promotes a collaborative working relationship and brings the Antiquities Act back to front and center with Native tribes."

President Begaye said that uranium mining on the Navajo Nation has left devastating impacts on the Navajo people and their lands. The history of uranium mining on the Nation is long and its effects are often untold or neglected. The Navajo people are left to deal with the legacy of chronic and critical illnesses.

A birth cohort study is occurring on the Nation to look at the effects of uranium mining, President Begaye said. Preliminary results of the study indicate that birth defects and other health issues are related to exposure to radioactive material.

"On the Navajo Nation, our people are dying from various forms of cancer. We believe many are directly related to the uranium mining of the 1940s through the 80s, and the leftover tailings from the uranium mill processing sites," President Begaye said. "The effects from uranium mining are real and must be prevented."

In 2005, the Navajo Nation Council passed the Dine Natural Resources Protection Act, which is a moratorium on uranium mining on Navajo Indian Country. Representative Grijalva's proposed Monument bill is a furtherance of the work begun by the Navajo Nation.

"The ban on uranium claims and mining have motivated me to support this effort," he said. "Our intention is that no one else will have to suffer from the effects of uranium mining and that everyone remembers that the Nation is still cleaning up from the cold war motivated uranium mining."

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