



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

CONTACTS:

Jared Touchin, Communications Director
(928) 274-4275

Crystalyne Curley, Sr. Public Information Officer
(928) 274-2758

nnopvp.communications@gmail.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 8, 2021

Navajo Nation applauds the passage of the RECA Amendments of 2021 by the House Judiciary Committee

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer commend the U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary’s passage of H.R. 5338, the Radiation and Exposure Compensation Act Amendments of 2021. The Radiation Exposure Compensation Act was first enacted in 1990 then amended in 2000, and is set to expire in 2022. The amendments introduced in September would extend the Act until 2040, expand downwinder eligibility based on geographic residency and expand the range of years that can be used for calculating exposure for certain individuals working in uranium mines, mills, or transporting uranium ore.

“The Navajo Nation is pleased by today’s markup of H.R. 5338 before the House Judiciary Committee. This is a united effort on behalf of former uranium miners, the Navajo Uranium Radiation Victims Committee, and their families, to secure just compensation and benefits for the health issues and detrimental impacts of uranium mining conducted by the federal government. The favorable passage of H.R. 5338 marks an important step toward extending the RECA trust fund that provides one-time compensation to victims and expands program coverage to impacted individuals. We appreciate the support of Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernández (D-N.M.), and Sen. Ben Ray Lujan (D-N.M.) and Sen. Mike Crapo (R-ID) in the Senate, to addressing this historic wrong against the Navajo people. We now look to the full House to pass H.R. 5338 as soon as possible,” said President Nez.

In October, President Nez, Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty, and Navajo Nation EPA Executive Director Valinda Shirley met with the Navajo Uranium Radiation Victims Committee, a group of Navajo former uranium miners led by Phil Harrison, to provide updates and to reaffirm their support for the bill.

President Nez added that while the Navajo Nation supports the bill, he and Vice President Myron Lizer strongly urge Congress to go further to include all downwinders, to expand eligibility for coverage under the program to include additional categories of uranium workers and types of cancers and other radiation-related illnesses, and to increase the compensation cap to a minimum of \$200,000 per individual regardless of worker classification or category of disease.

“We have a commitment to the former uranium miners and their families to do everything we can to get the RECA Amendments passed by Congress and signed into law. We are very grateful to the House Judiciary Committee for their support today, and we look forward to working with our Congressional members to keep this momentum moving forward. Together, we have to get this done for our Navajo people,” said Vice President Lizer.

In March, President Nez also provided testimony before the U.S. Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties, in support of Navajo people who continue to experience long-term health impacts due to radioactive contamination and exposure from abandoned uranium mines. He also met with members of the Navajo Uranium Radiation Victims Committee to gain input and support for the testimony.

The Nez-Lizer Administration will continue to work with members of Congress and others to support H.R. 5338, the Radiation and Exposure Compensation Act Amendments of 2021.

###

For the latest news from the Office of the President and Vice President, please visit <http://www.opvp.navajo-nsn.gov/> or find us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.