



The Navajo Nation
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**President Nez applauds the U.S. Senate's approval of a
two-year extension of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act**



PHOTO: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and First Lady Phefelia Nez meeting with U.S. Sen. Ben Ray Luján (D-N.M.) in Washington D.C. on March 29, 2022.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez commended Thursday's approval by the U.S. Senate of a two-year extension of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA), which is set to expire in July. If the short-term extension is passed by the House, it will provide more time to work with congressional members on a long-term solution that 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.

In March, President Nez met with members of both political parties in Washington, D.C., to affirm the Navajo Nation's support and to speak for affected Navajo families and the Navajo Uranium Radiation Victims Committee. The Radiation Exposure Compensation Act was first enacted in 1990, then amended in 2000, and is set to expire in July of this year.

"With unanimous consent from the U.S. Senate for the two-year extension, it demonstrates strong bi-partisan support for former uranium miners, downwinders, and many others who have to live with the devastating health effects to this day. We need the support of the House to finalize the extension, so that we can continue to work for the reauthorization and expansion of RECA through 2040. The meetings we had with members of both political parties last month were critical to garnering the support that was needed to push the two-year extension through the Senate," said President Nez.

He added, "This is a united effort on behalf of former uranium miners 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 RECA bill is an opportunity for Congress to be a part of something historic for the Navajo people, the Navajo Uranium Radiation Victims Committee, and other impacted groups. We thank Senator Ben Ray Luján, Senator Mike Crapo, Senator Mike Lee, and many others who helped to move this forward."

In March of last year, President Nez 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 to hear directly from former uranium miners and their families.

In addition to the reauthorization, the Navajo Nation continues to 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.

President Nez will continue working with Congressional members and federal officials to garner support from House members for the two-year extension of RECA. The Nez-Lizer Administration also thanks the 24th Navajo Nation Council, Navajo Nation Washington Office, and others for their support.

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