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**President Nez continues push for the reauthorization  
and expansion 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, First Lady Phefelia Nez, and Navajo Nation Washington Office officials met with members of Congress last week, to reaffirm their support for the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act Amendments of 2021, which 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 Radiation Exposure Compensation Act was first enacted in 1990, then amended in 2000, and is set to expire in July of this year. The most recent bill was introduced in the U.S. House and Senate on Sept. 22, 2021. President Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer continue to work with the Navajo Uranium Radiation Victims Committee and members of the Navajo Nation Council to advocate for the reauthorization.

“With the current Act set to expire three months from now, we need bipartisan support for the law’s extension and for the reauthorization and expansion of RECA through 2040. The meetings we had with members of both political parties last week are critical to garnering the support that is needed to push this bill through the House and Senate. We appreciate members of both parties for sitting down and listening to our concerns, many of which reflect the reports and testimony of our Navajo people. This is a united effort on behalf of former uranium miners and their



**PHOTO: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and First Lady Phefelia Nez meeting with U.S. Rep. John Curtis (R-UT) in Washington D.C. on March 29, 2022.**

families, to secure just compensation and benefits for the health issues and detrimental impacts of uranium mining conducted by the federal government. The RECA Amendments of 2021 presents an opportunity for this Congress to be a part of something historic for the Navajo people, the Navajo Uranium Radiation Victims Committee, and other impacted groups,” said President Nez.

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 in October to gain more input and to hear directly from former uranium miners and their families.

Among numerous congressional members, President Nez met with U.S. Sen. Ben Ray Luján (D-N.M.), Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.), Sen. Mark Kelly (D-AZ), Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ), Congresswoman Yvette Herrell (R-N.M.), Congressman John Curtis (R-UT), and Congresswoman Melanie Stansbury (D-N.M.).

In addition to the reauthorization, the Navajo Nation strongly urges 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 are committed to the former uranium miners and their families to do everything we can to get the RECA Amendments passed by July. There is support among many members of Congress, but we have a few issues to work through to get where we want to be. We will continue to work together with all parties to get this across the finish line,” said Vice President Lizer.

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