



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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Nez-Lizer honor the sacrifices of Navajo miners and families impacted by radiation exposure on “National Day of Remembrance for Downwinders”

WINDOW ROCK Ariz. — Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer marked the National Day of Remembrance for Downwinders on Thursday, in remembrance of the harm done to the Navajo people and other Americans as a result of nuclear testing conducted by the federal government in the 1950s and early 1960s.

The Navajo Nation has an extensive and tragic history with radiation exposure as a consequence of the United States' nuclear power development program. Between 1944 and 1986, thousands of Navajo people were employed by the uranium industry in mining and related positions on Navajo lands. High levels of radiation exposure were present on the jobsite, while uranium dust and other hazardous materials created health risks in the homes and communities of uranium mine workers. The Navajo people also suffered the ill effects of exposure to environmental hazards from above and underground weapons testing, as well as the 1979 Rio Puerco uranium tailings spill, that severely contaminated Navajo land and resources.

President Nez stated, "Today, we honor the sacrifices made by our Navajo people for our country's national security. Our people have sacrificed more than we will ever know and our people have used our sacred language to help win a war. Generations of *Diné* men, women, children and elders have endured great harm in the federal government's pursuit of nuclear power. Each life affected by or lost to radiation exposure is one life too many. The harm is not only the individual health of our Navajo people, but also to our collective emotional and spiritual health. On this our National Day of Remembrance, we acknowledge the deep, ongoing suffering of the Navajo people impacted by radiation exposure."

President Nez and Vice President Lizer also acknowledged the Navajo Uranium Radiation Victims Committee, chaired by President Phil Harrison, Jr., for their dedicated support and advocacy on behalf of Navajo people impacted by radiation exposure.

"We have and will continue to work closely together in addressing the urgent needs of the Navajo Nation and our impacted members and communities," said Vice President Lizer. "The Navajo

Uranium Radiation Victims Committee and the 24th Navajo Nation Council are committed to achieving justice for *Diné* radiation exposure victims."

This year's National Day of Remembrance is significant as Congress is considering urgently needed amendments to the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act of 1990. The Act provides one-time compensation to certain uranium workers and other individuals as restitution for the serious illnesses caused by radiation exposure. The amendments would expand the program's scope to cover additional employment categories and compensable illnesses, as well as provide critical funding and administrative improvements. The Act, however, is set to expire in July of this year leaving an untold number of Navajo citizens at risk of incomplete or barred claims.

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