



25th Navajo Nation Council

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Speaker Curley speaks in support of RECA expansion and reauthorization with U.S. Senator Hawley



PHOTO: Sen. Josh Hawley joined with Speaker Curley and the Navajo Nation President's Office to strategize a RECA reauthorization before it expires.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — In a powerful demonstration of solidarity, Speaker Crystalyne Curley of the 25th Navajo Nation Council and Executive Director Justin Ahasteen of the Navajo Nation Washington Office, on behalf of President Nygren, joined forces with U.S. Senator Josh Hawley (R-MO) on Capitol Hill to fervently champion the extension and amplification of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA), which is on the brink of expiration in July this year.

RECA was originally enacted in 1990 and later amended in 2000, serving as a crucial mechanism for providing one-time restitution to the valiant veterans and the communities that bore the brunt of contamination from the United States' uranium industry and nuclear weapons program—contamination that has deeply scarred the Navajo Nation with a lasting health and ecological catastrophe.

Despite the Senate's passage of an amendment last year to weave the RECA provisions into a national security spending bill, its progression was stalled in the House.

Standing amid a group of staunch advocates from Arizona and Missouri, Sen. Hawley announced his intent to strategically incorporate the RECA amendments into an imminent Senate appropriations bill. These comprehensive provisions seek not only to include post-1971 uranium workers and core drillers and to extend RECA until 2040 but also to acknowledge renal cancer as a compensable disease, permit the amalgamation of work histories, delineate the expansion of eligibility regions for downwind exposure, and enhance compensation for claimants—including downwinders—affected by atmospheric testing. The amendments also advocate for the acceptance of affidavits to verify work history, physical presence, and on-site participation, and they underscore the necessity for an Epidemiological Impact Study to thoroughly investigate the repercussions on uranium miners, their kin, and others exposed in non-occupational settings.

Speaker Curley asserted the urgent need for legislative action: “For decades, we have seen a procession of our leaders, former uranium workers, and countless others stand before Congress, pleading for justice on Capitol Hill. It is imperative that Congress acts decisively to provide and enhance the compensation and support for the Navajo victims whose sacrifices in the uranium mines were pivotal in propelling the United States to victory during the Cold War.”

Echoing this sentiment, Executive Director Justin Ahasteen stated: “The legacy of uranium mining has inflicted profound suffering upon our people. It is a debt of honor that the United States must address. Our people have paid with their health and their lives for a national victory that was celebrated far from the mesas and valleys of the Navajo Nation. Now we look to Congress to right these historical wrongs and uphold the promises made, as we continue to carry the burden of this toxic inheritance.”

In October, the 25th Navajo Nation Council’s Naabik’iyati Committee passed a resolution with unanimous consent that fervently backs the expansion and reauthorization of RECA, reflecting the unyielding will of the Navajo people to seek justice and healing from the ravages of the past.

The Navajo Nation Council in collaboration with the Navajo Nation Washington Office will continue to advocate for justice for our Navajo uranium workers.

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