



25th Navajo Nation Council

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Speaker Curley Pushes for Essential Amendments to Radiation Exposure Compensation Act



Photo: Speaker Crystalyne Curley of the 25th Navajo Nation Council

WASHINGTON, D.C. — This week, Speaker Crystalyne Curley of the 25th Navajo Nation Council and Navajo Nation Washington Office Executive Director Justin Ahasteen, alongside Navajo Uranium Radiation Victims Committee members Phil Harrison and Leslie Begay, advocated on Capitol Hill for critical amendments and an extension of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA), which is set to expire in June 2024.

Their visit included strategic meetings with members of Congress, a press conference, and a prayer vigil to honor the affected individuals and underscore the urgent need for congressional action.

Enacted in 1990 and amended in 2000, RECA was designed to provide one-time compensation to veterans and communities impacted by America's uranium industry and nuclear development program. This compensation is especially significant for the Navajo Nation, which continues to suffer from the health and environmental effects of uranium mining conducted by the federal government.

Speaker Curley emphasized the importance of legislative action: "We call on Congress to pass

the RECA amendments to properly compensate all Navajo miners still suffering from radiation exposure. Our people have endured significant hardships due to America's nuclear agenda, impacting their health and quality of life. The amendments we propose are not merely legislative changes; they are affirmations of justice and a pledge to heal the deep-seated wounds inflicted on our communities."

The proposed amendments aim to expand RECA's coverage to include uranium miners post-1971, recognize additional health conditions such as chronic lymphocytic leukemia and chronic kidney diseases, and improve the claims process to make it more accessible for Navajo claimants.

Speaker Curley expressed her gratitude to U.S. Senators Josh Hawley of Missouri, Ben Ray Luján of New Mexico, Mike Crapo of Idaho, and Representatives Teresa Leger Fernandez of New Mexico, Paul Gosar, and Eli Crane of Arizona. Their collective support is crucial in addressing these historic wrongs.

As the legislative deadline approaches, the urgency for Congress to act intensifies. The Navajo Nation advocates for the swift passage of S. 3853 - The Radiation Exposure Compensation Reauthorization Act, to ensure that the Navajo people and other affected communities no longer face delays in receiving the justice they deserve.

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