

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 30, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
United State House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jefferies
Minority Leader
United State House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Johnson and Minority Leader Jefferies,

We are writing to urge you to immediately act to pass the Radiation Exposure Compensation Reauthorization Act, which was approved by the Senate on March 7, 2024 by a vote of 69-30. This critical legislation is critical to the communities and individuals historically marginalized and left suffering from the consequences of the United States' nuclear testing program.

Between 1945 and 1992, the U.S. conducted 206 above-ground nuclear weapons tests, dispersing radioactive material across vast swathes of the nation. The landmark film Oppenheimer has brought renewed attention to these events, particularly highlighting the first nuclear explosion in New Mexico in 1945. The "downwinders," along with those involved in uranium mining, milling, and transportation, are still enduring the health impacts from their exposure to this radiation. Initially established in 1990, the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) acknowledges these sacrifices by offering a one-time benefit to those afflicted with diseases due to their exposure to atomic testing and uranium industry work. Since its establishment, we have learned that far more communities were impacted by radiation exposure but were left out of the program. With RECA set to expire in June 2024, time is running out to ensure these individuals are not forgotten.

Although the Senate took a laudable step by passing an amendment in the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2024 to strengthen RECA, it was omitted in the final bill. Recently, the Senate passed a scaled down but nonetheless vital measure that proposes a five-year extension of the RECA program and expands compensation to downwinders in Western states, including New Mexico, and to post-1971 uranium workers, alongside residents in Missouri, Kentucky, Alaska, and Tennessee who have suffered from exposure to improperly stored nuclear waste.

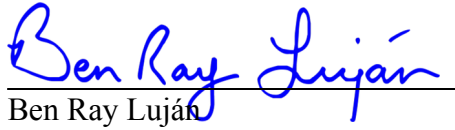
The action in the Senate to strengthen RECA was meaningful step in seeking long overdue justice. But it is important that the scope of the RECA's coverage be expanded to cover others who suffer the health consequences of the U.S.'s pursuit of national security to include regions in Pike and Scioto County, Ohio; Armstrong County, Pennsylvania; and communities near the Hanford site in Washington, where people have been adversely affected by the mishandling of nuclear waste. The residents in these areas deserve recognition and compensation for the health challenges they face due to government nuclear activity.


We urge to act immediately to strengthen the RECA program before its impending sunset in June 2024. The United States government exposed these Americans to radiation as part of our national security efforts through World War II and the Cold War. It is long past time that RECA is strengthened to give these Americans their recognition and compensation. Their livelihoods, often devastated by the long-term consequences of radiation exposure, depend on your leadership and commitment to rectifying past injustices. Let us honor the

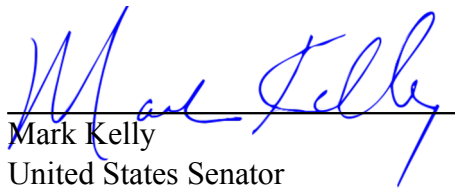
commitment we made to these citizens by ensuring they receive the support and recognition they so rightly deserve.

Thank you for your attention to this crucial matter.


Sincerely,



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator

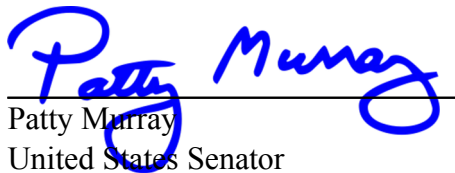

Mike Crapo
United States Senator

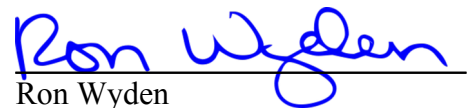

Mark Kelly
United States Senator


James E. Risch
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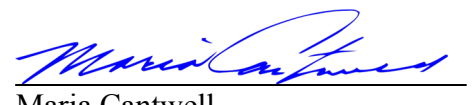

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United States Senator


Patty Murray
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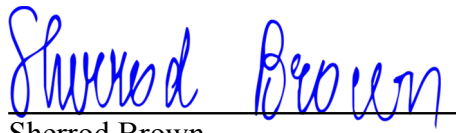

Maria Cantwell
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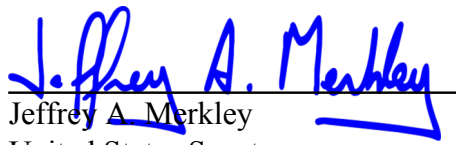
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United States Senator



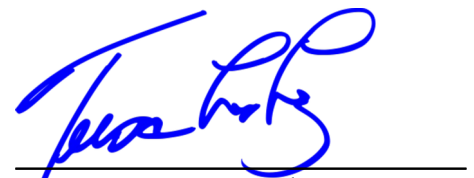
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



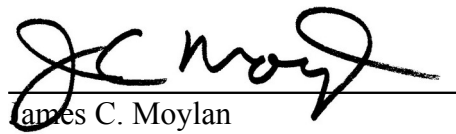
Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



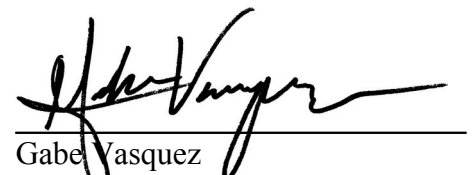
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



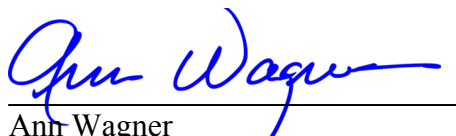
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Member of Congress



James C. Moylan
Member of Congress



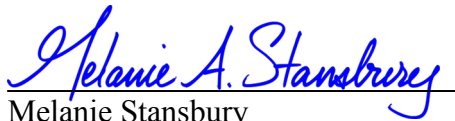
Gabe Vasquez
Member of Congress



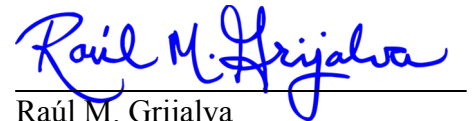
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Member of Congress



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Dina Titus
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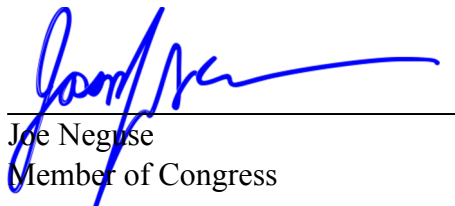
Steve Cohen
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Susie Lee
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Val Hoyle
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Joe Neguse
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Josh Hawley
United States Senator

CC: Chair Durbin
Ranking Member Graham
Chair Jordan
Ranking Member Nadler