November 01, 2021

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Robert Scott
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Teresa Leger Fernandez
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Dick Durbin
United States Senate

The Honorable Mike Crapo
United States Senate

Statement: The Breakthrough Institute supports Congressional action to extend and expand the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act and to fund remediation of sites impacted by historic uranium mining and weapons testing

Dear Representatives Nadler, Scott, Pallone, and Leger Fernandez and Senators Durbin and Crapo:

The Breakthrough Institute strongly supports the provisions of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act Amendments of 2021 (H.R.5338 and S.2798). This legislation crucially extends existing support to compensate Americans exposed to radiation from nuclear weapons testing and from uranium mining for military nuclear programs in the late 20th century. In addition, compensation eligibility would be expanded to cover a greater number of workers, sites, states and territories impacted by historic fallout and radiation exposure events, providing long-overdue justice to Americans who were excluded from earlier iterations of this program.

Congress should prioritize swift passage of this bill, as this important compensation program will otherwise expire in July 2022, leaving outstanding obligations to affected peoples unfulfilled.
The Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) provides tangible restitution for past harms that impacted citizens across the United States, including many Native American Tribes and Pacific Islander communities.\textsuperscript{iv} Past exposure events resulted primarily from activities and programs that sought to advance perceived national interests, overwhelmingly associated with nuclear weapons manufacturing and military technology research and development.\textsuperscript{v,vi,vii} As such, the U.S. federal government has a moral duty to recompense American citizens that have suffered from practices carried out in pursuit of national aims.

The Breakthrough Institute further highlights that RECA alone is not sufficient to fully meet the federal government’s obligation to remedy past injustices related to weapons testing and uranium mining. Congress should also prioritize the appropriation of additional funding to accelerate cleanup efforts at historically impacted sites, many of which are located on or near Indigenous lands and pose outstanding environmental and health hazards. Increasing support for cleanup activities will not only drive progress on long-neglected remediation efforts but expand the cleanup and waste storage options available to federal, state, and Tribal agencies, allowing authorities to implement solutions that better serve impacted communities.

Sincerely,

Dr. Seaver Wang  
Senior Climate and Energy Analyst  
The Breakthrough Institute

Dr. Adam Stein  
Senior Energy and Nuclear Power Analyst  
The Breakthrough Institute

CC:

The Honorable Jim Jordan  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Cathy Rodgers  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Virginia Foxx  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Chuck Grassley  
United States Senate