



SAN JUAN COUNTY COMMISSION

Item 17.

Willie Grayeyes
Kenneth Maryboy

Chairman
Vice-Chair

Bruce Adams
Mack McDonald

Commissioner
Administrator

February 12, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

The San Juan County Commission supports extension and expansion of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA). Since its inception in 1990, RECA has provided compensation to nearly 37,000 claimants exposed to radiation by the exploration, mining, transportation and milling of uranium, and numerous atomic bomb tests across the West.¹ RECA and the Trust Fund from which claims are paid are currently set to terminate in 2022 without Congressional action.

As the County in Utah with perhaps one of the longest and most troubling histories with the uranium industry, many of our residents have suffered and continued to suffer the health impacts of exposure due to mining, milling, transporting, and testing activities. Radiation exposure has impacted families in every corner of our County, and particularly those residents living on the Navajo and Ute Mountain Ute Nations. Compensation under RECA has been a critical lifeline for many of these San Juan County families.

Further, we know many impacted individuals are still waiting for their claims to be processed—253 RECA compensation claims were pending as of January 10, 2021. With this in mind, we are determined to avoid RECA termination and hope to see Congressional action to extend the sunset of this critical program well into the future.

The Radiation Exposure Compensation Act Amendments of 2019 proposed, among other changes, to extend the time for filing of claims under RECA for an additional 23 years (through 2045), to increase compensation for downwinders from \$50,000 to \$150,000, and to expand residency requirements to conform with Tribal law such as the acceptance of home site leases.²

The San Juan County Commission supports each of these improvements to RECA and expects similar bipartisan legislation to be filed in 2021. We respectfully urge the State of Utah and Governor to join us in calling for the introduction of such legislation and working with members of the Utah Congressional Delegation to ensure its swift passage, following in the footsteps of former Utah Rep. Owens and Sen. Hatch, the sponsors of the 1990 legislation. Further, we fully support state Rep. Doug Owen's "Concurrent Resolution Supporting

¹ ["The Radiation Exposure Compensation Act \(RECA\): Compensation Related to Exposure to Radiation from Atomic Weapons Testing and Uranium Mining"](#), Congressional Research Service, January 13, 2021.

² Radiation Exposure Compensation Act Amendments of 2019. [S.947](#), Sen. Mike Crapo and companion [H.R. 3783](#), Rep. Ben Ray Lujan.

Extension and Expansion of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act,” H.C.R 18, that is pending in the Utah legislature.

Respectfully,

Willie Grayeyes
San Juan County Commission, Chair
