



25th Navajo Nation Council

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

MEDIA CONTACT:

nnlb.communications@gmail.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 24, 2024

Speaker Curley, former uranium miners, and downwinders urge Speaker Johnson to bring RECA extension to a vote



Speaker Crystalyne Curley said extending RECA is a national issue not just a Navajo issue.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — On Tuesday, 25th Navajo Nation Council Speaker Crystalyne Curley stood shoulder to shoulder with former uranium miners and downwinders affected by uranium production, in calling on U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson to swiftly bring the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) extension to the House floor for a vote. The Senate overwhelmingly voted in support of the bill five months ago.

RECA, which provides compensation to individuals exposed to harmful radiation due to uranium mining and nuclear weapons testing expired, leaving thousands without recourse. Speaker Curley, a longtime advocate for those impacted by the legacy of uranium mining and atomic testing, emphasized the urgency of this matter.

Speaker Curley and Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren joined a coalition of RECA advocates, including the Navajo Uranium Radiation Victims Committee, as they marched to Capitol Hill for a press conference with members of Congress including U.S. Sens. Josh Hawley (R-MO), Ben Ray Luján (D-N.M.), and Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.) and U.S. Reps. Teresa Leger Fernández, Gabe Vasquez (D-N.M.), and Melanie Stansbury (D-N.M.).



Speaker Curley joined Navajo Nation President Dr. Buu Nygren, former miners, and downwinders as they marched on Capitol Hill this week, calling for a RECA extension.

Many of the former miners and downwinders traveled over 37 hours by bus to advocate and fight for the RECA bill on Capitol Hill this week.

“We stand here today united by a common purpose — to demand justice. This is not just a Navajo issue. It is a national issue, and it is a human issue,” said Speaker Curley. “We call on Speaker Johnson and the House to take immediate action to pass this bill. Every day that passes without action means more families suffering, more lives lost, and more injustice.”

RECA, first enacted in 1990, was a critical step in acknowledging the U.S. government’s responsibility for the health impacts caused by radiation exposure from uranium mining and nuclear testing. The program provided benefits and compensation to tens of thousands of individuals, but many claimants remain.

Former miners and downwinders shared their personal stories at today’s press conference, underscoring the devastating and long-lasting effects of radiation exposure on their health and families. Many expressed their frustration with delays in extending RECA and their hope that Speaker Johnson will act before time runs out.

The push for the RECA extension has gained bipartisan support in both the House and Senate, with lawmakers recognizing the ongoing health crises in impacted communities, particularly in the southwest. Advocates argue that without immediate action, many more could lose access to life-saving benefits.

###