



March 22, 2021

The Honorable Steve Cohen,  
Chair  
House Committee on the Judiciary  
Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties  
2138 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Subject: Radiation Exposure Compensation Act Amendments of 2021

Dear Congressman Cohen,

The Alliance of Nuclear Worker Advocacy Groups (ANWAG) respectfully submits this statement in support of passing the Radiation Exposure Compensation Amendment Act of 2021 (RECA) for your consideration. ANWAG is a grassroots organization who advocate for the Department of Energy's nuclear weapons workers and uranium mining industry workers who developed illnesses which arose from their exposure to radiation and other toxic substances.

In 1990, RECA pioneered the path for the United States government to accept responsibility to its citizens who were harmed without their knowledge and consent. The statute provides medical screening and financial compensation to individuals who developed certain diseases that arose from their exposure to radiation through their work in the uranium mining industry and from living downwind from the above ground atomic tests. RECA is used as the base legislation to compensate Department of Energy (DOE) nuclear weapons workers under the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act of 2000, as amended.

One of the most important reforms contained in the amendments is to extend eligibility for uranium employees who worked after December 31, 1971.

While DOE halted the purchase of domestic uranium for its nuclear weapons in 1971, the uranium workers still toiled in the dangerous environment by providing the uranium to be used in the US nuclear power plants. The last uranium mine, located New Mexico, closed in 1989.

The dangers of exposure did not magically disappear on January 1, 1972. The Federal Mine Safety and Health Act was not enacted until 1977. The Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration took on the responsibility of inspecting the uranium mines. However, as

reported in 2016 by the *In These Times*<sup>1</sup> magazine, were inadequate and did not protect the miners.

The post-71 uranium workers experienced similar working conditions and subsequent adverse health effects as the workers who provided the uranium for the Cold War effort do. It is important to note that the post-71 miners' contribution to the power grid is as valuable to the United States government and citizens as those who mined to help defend the United States during the Cold War.

ANWAG supports the other reforms included in the legislation including expanding the coverage for downwinders. We also respectfully request that this reform legislation strike "(other than chronic lymphocytic leukemia), (CLL), from RECA Section 4(b)(2). The current science now accepts that CLL is a radiogenic cancer. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health has developed methodology to reconstruct dose under EEOICPA<sup>2</sup>. However, since RECA still excludes CLL, DOE nuclear weapons workers are not eligible to be included in a class designated as a Special Exposure Cohort if they have that disease, thus denying those claimants the medical and financial benefits afforded to others in the class.

We thank you for this opportunity to submit our comments for the record. ANWAG hopes that the Committee will recommend further debate in the House and that these workers and those individuals who were in the path of the radioactive cloud from the atomic tests will receive their just compensation.

Sincerely,



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<sup>1</sup> [Uranium Mine and Mill Workers are Dying, and Nobody Will Take Responsibility - In These Times](#)

<sup>2</sup> [CLL FRN.pdf \(cdc.gov\)](#)