



Council Meeting Staff Report

September 5, 2023

Agenda No.: B.

Indexes (Council Goals):

Presenters: Danielle Duran; Randall Ryti; Theresa Cull

Legislative File: 17782-23

Title

Discussion and Possible Action on Los Alamos County Support for the Amendment of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA)

Recommended Action

I move that Council authorize the Chair to sign a letter of support regarding the extension and expansion of the RECA as amended within the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) on behalf of the County of Los Alamos.

County Manager's Recommendation

The County Manager recommends that Council approve support of the amendment to the RECA as indicated by the Recommendation of the Council's Federal Committee.

Board, Committee or Commission Recommendation

The Council Federal Committee recommends that the full Council support the extension and expansion of the RECA and direct staff to draft a letter of support to be signed by the Chair and transmitted to the office of Senator Ben Ray Lujan.

Body

Originally passed in 1990, the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) provides a one-time benefit payment to individuals who may have developed cancer or other specified diseases after being exposed to radiation from atomic weapons testing or uranium mining, milling or transporting. The RECA program is scheduled to sunset in 2024.

Unfortunately, the original RECA bill failed to recognize that radioactive fallout is not restricted by state lines and left out so many impacted communities. At present, only those who lived near the Nevada Test Site during a period of atomic weapons testing are eligible for compensation for their status as a downwinder. This measure seeks to remedy that to include other state impacted by nuclear testing.

This amendment would update the current RECA program by expanding the geographic downwinder eligibility to include then-residents of Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah. This legislation would also expand eligibility for certain individuals working in uranium mines, mills or transporting uranium ore after 1971. Our legislation would increase the amount of compensation an individual may receive and extend the RECA program another 19 years following enactment.

The amendment is co-sponsored by Sen. Lujan (NM), Sen. Hawley (MO), and Sen. Crapo (ID). The Senate version of the NDAA which includes this amendment was passed in the U.S. Senate on July 27, 2023.

Fiscal and Staff Impact/Unplanned Item

There is minimal fiscal and staff impact due to this item.