



NAVAJO NATION WASHINGTON OFFICE

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MEDIA ADVISORY
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Indigenous Radiation Victims Will Travel to Washington, D.C. to Urge Congress to Pass RECA



Photo Courtesy of 25th Navajo Nation Council

WASHINGTON – On September 22, 2024, a group of Navajo Nation citizens, alongside Indigenous community members from the Southwest, will gather at the National Hispanic Cultural Center in Albuquerque, NM to travel via bus to Washington, D.C., to demand urgent action from Congress on the Radiation Exposure Compensation Reauthorization Act – S. 3853 (RECA). The bus will depart at 9:00 AM MST and is expected to arrive in the late evening in Washington, DC on Monday September 23rd.

The group, consisting of middle-aged and elderly former uranium miners, Downwinders, and veterans suffering from illnesses due to uranium mining and nuclear weapons testing, will gather at the Navajo Nation Washington office at 10:00 AM on Tuesday, September 24, 2024, for a briefing followed by a march to the U.S. Capitol. They aim to raise awareness about the critical need for health screenings and financial compensation.

At the Capitol grounds, the *DinéTah* Navajo Dancers will perform traditional dances and provide blessings to restore *Hózhq'* to affected individuals.

The ceremonial acts are to offer prayers for the success of the advocacy efforts and a positive outcome to persuade lawmakers to act on RECA. The blessings are rooted in Navajo traditions of healing, protection and guidance from the Creator to ensure the advocacy efforts are empowered with cultural strength, said Justin Ahasteen, Executive Director of the Navajo Nation Washington Office.

Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren will attend the march and be available for media questions.

“Our people have suffered in silence for too long,” he said. *“Families have lost loved ones, and entire communities are dealing with the aftermath of uranium mining and radiation exposure. Congress must act now to pass RECA and fulfill its responsibility. This is not just about compensation. This is about justice, and it’s about healing.”*

The RECA bill has been delayed in the House since June despite overwhelming bipartisan support in the Senate which passed it 69-30.

The gathering of impacted families from New Mexico and Arizona underscores the urgency to address the devastating health impacts Indigenous communities have faced for decades because of government negligence.

“The Navajo people were disproportionately affected by uranium mining during the Cold War era, yet adequate compensation and healthcare access remain elusive. The demonstration is part of a broader national effort to pressure lawmakers to move swiftly on RECA before more lives are lost,” Ahasteen said. *“With radiation-related illnesses still prevalent among Indigenous populations, and many sites on tribal lands still contaminated with radioactive waste, this is an issue that cannot wait.”*

The march is supported by the Navajo Nation Washington Office which raised more than \$40,000 from corporate donors and grants to fund travel and hotel accommodations. The marchers’ purpose is to call on Congress to reauthorize RECA.

Media and journalists are invited. President Nygren and Navajo Nation Council Speaker Crystalyne Curley will be available for interviews.

For additional information or to coordinate interviews with Navajo leadership in Washington, please contact Marlena Forster at mforster@nnwo.org or by phone at 202-682-7390.

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