March 2, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

We write today to urge you to extend the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) program in the upcoming spending package. The important program lapses in July 2022.

In 1945, the United States exploded the first atomic bomb at the Trinity Site in New Mexico. Over the next 48 years, the U.S. conducted more than 200 above-ground nuclear tests, releasing harmful radioactive material into the air in many parts of the United States, including New Mexico, Idaho, Colorado, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Montana, and Guam. These tests exposed nearby communities to radiation – those communities are now known as the downwinders. It also exposed those mining and working in the uranium industry to radiation. As a result of the exposure, tens of thousands contracted cancers and other serious diseases.

In 1990, Congress passed RECA on a bipartisan basis to provide a one-time payment to many of those harmed. The program provides benefits to qualified persons who participated in onsite tests of an atomic weapon; downwinders in specified areas near the Nevada Test Site, but not other test sites; and uranium miners, millers, and ore transporters who worked in the industry between 1942 and 1971.

Many Americans are still falling sick and dying due to radiation exposure. The United States should not walk away from its commitment to compensate these people and we must extend RECA. It is also important to note that we are working on a bipartisan basis to expand and improve RECA through the bipartisan H.R. 5338, the RECA Amendments of 2021. Our bill will make sure that uranium miners and downwinders who were previously left out can receive the compensation and support they deserve. We look forward to continuing to engage with you on that legislation as well.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,
cc:
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Chair, Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Kay Granger, Ranking Member, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Jerry Nadler, Chair, Judiciary Committee
The Honorable Jim Jordan, Ranking Member, Judiciary Committee
The Honorable Frank Pallone, Chair, Energy and Commerce Committee
The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers, Ranking Member, Energy and Commerce Committee
The Honorable Bobby Scott, Chair, Education and Labor Committee
The Honorable Virginia Foxx, Ranking Member, Education and Labor Committee