

Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment

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Former Uranium Workers and Impacted Community Members Descend on Roundhouse to Raise Concerns About the Continuing Negative Health and Environmental Effects from Historic Uranium Mining

*** Uranium Workers' Day at New Mexico Legislature is Friday, February 20th**

The Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment will be hosting the Uranium Workers' Day at the New Mexico State Legislature, in Santa Fe, on Friday, February 20th. Starting at 9:30 am there will be a press conference in the Rotunda with former miners and workers and people from the impacted communities. Educational displays and information will be available in the East Hall of the Rotunda. Twenty-three organizations have cosponsored the day.

Representative Doreen Johnson has introduced House Memorial 70 in the NM Legislature calling for expanding compensation for all uranium workers in the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) proposed amendments. Representative Georgene Louis will be introducing a Memorial requesting a base-line health study in impacted communities.

New Mexico Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich cosponsored reintroduction of US Senate Bill 331 with amendments to the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA.) Representative Ben Ray Lujan will be cosponsoring the US House companion bill soon. RECA is designed to assist those directly affected by work in uranium mines and those exposed to the above-ground nuclear testing in the U.S. The amendments seek to expand the eligibility to affected individuals in Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah. When RECA was first passed in 1990, it was limited to individuals in certain counties in Arizona, Colorado and Utah, and excluded uranium workers who worked in the mines after 1970.

A new health impacts assessment by McKinley Community Place Matters indicate active mining-era exposures predicted an increased risk of kidney disease. Additionally, environmental legacy exposures, such as living near a uranium mine, predicted increased risk of hypertension and autoimmune disease.

Speakers at the 9:30 event on February 20 include:

Linda Evers with Post “71 Uranium Workers Committee. Ms. Evers lives in Milan and has been working for decades to gain fair compensation for uranium workers who are not covered under the current version of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act.

Larry King volunteers with Eastern Navajo Diné Against Uranium Mining. He was working for United Nuclear Corporation when the largest uranium tailings spill in the US breached an earthen dam in Churchrock in July 1979 spilling millions of gallons of radioactive tailings solution.

Edith Hood lives in the Red Water Pond Road Community on Navajo Nation. Edith is a former mine worker and lives between two massive uranium tailings piles that continue to contaminate her community.

Jordon Johnson is the Coordinator for the McKinley Community Place Matters. He has been working with community health agencies to study the long term health impacts for exposure to uranium.

Johnson adds “Research has documented that exposure to dust, gases, exhaust, and fumes as well as lack of protective clothing and safety measures such as miners drinking water from the mine ceilings or eating their lunches while work, can result in nonmalignant and malignant respiratory diseases. The disastrous effects of uranium mining and milling and health impacts from working in the mine are stressors for individuals and families.”

Please contact Susan Gordon for a list of former uranium workers available for press interviews and a complete list of co-sponsors