



109TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. _____

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. CRAPO (for himself and Mr. CRAIG) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To include the State of Idaho as an affected area under the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (42 U.S.C. 2210 note).

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. INCLUSION OF IDAHO IN RADIATION EXPO-**
4 **SURE COMPENSATION.**

5 Section 4(b)(1) of the Radiation Exposure Com-
6 pensation Act (42 U.S.C. 2210 note) is amended—

7 (1) in subparagraph (B), by striking “and”
8 after the semicolon; and

9 (2) by adding after subparagraph (C) the fol-
10 lowing:

1

“(D) the State of Idaho; and”.

MIKE CRAPO
U.S. SENATOR
IDAHO

DEPUTY WHIP
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CO-CHAIRMAN, SPORTSMEN'S CAUCUS
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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 11, 2005

Amendment to the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, in the 1950s and 1960s, this country was in the midst of a cold war and arms race, a race to perfect the hydrogen bomb. To win the race, nuclear weapons technology was developed using above ground testing in Idaho's neighbor to the south, Nevada. During these tests, Idahoans recount going outside in the evenings to look at the beautiful sunsets caused by the testing. Unfortunately and unbeknown to them, these skies were filled with dangerous radiation that very much elevated their exposure and subsequent risk of developing cancer.

I will not debate whether government authorities adequately knew the extent of the long-term dangers to radiation exposure. However, after a long and protracted discussion in this very chamber, Congress did recognize that what had occurred during this time of nuclear testing and rightly came forward providing for compensation through the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act of 1990 (RECA). This bill said that if you lived in certain counties in certain states during a certain period of time and had specified diseases, you were eligible for compensation. It is now time to review that program and make it work for everyone who may have become ill because of radiation fall-out exposure.

The criteria established in the Act were driven by limited scientific knowledge and political expediency. This was recognized in 1999, when a group of Senators, led by Senator Hatch, amended RECA to include additional counties in Arizona. During the floor debate at the time, Senator Hatch said, "Through advances in science, we now know so much more about the effects of radiation than we did in the late 1950s and 1960s. Our current state of scientific knowledge allows us to pinpoint with more accuracy which disease are reasonably believed to be related to radiation exposure, and that is what necessitated the legislation we are considering today."

But the truth is even more encompassing than a few more counties. According to a report from the National Academies of Sciences, a report commissioned by Congress, radiation fall-out didn't know any arbitrary geographic boundaries. It didn't stop because it crossed a state or county line. The NAS report, released last month, clearly demonstrated that we continue to be wide of the mark in who is eligible for compensation and that is why I am introducing legislation today to bring RECA back on course. Information used to establish who would be eligible for compensation failed to recognize that four counties in Idaho ranked in the top five in having the highest per capita thyroid

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dosage of radiation in the nation, more than any county currently recognized by RECA for eligibility. This clear inequity must be rectified; Idaho has a documented history of high cancer rates in people who lived in these areas during testing.

At this time I would like to thank people like Sheri Garmon, Kathy Skippen, Tona Henderson, and so many others who have spent time and energy on this issue. Some like Sheri are fighting multiple cancers and yet have taken the time to pursue their belief that they to deserved to be eligible for the RECA program. The NAS report recognizes that the RECA program needs revamping, but Idahoans deserve equal treatment with those in Utah, Arizona, and Nevada now. They should not have to wait while Congress comes up with a better way to administer this program. That is why I am introducing legislation today that will extend the present program to cover the full state of Idaho. And I am encouraging my colleagues to work with me on making the entire RECA program more comprehensive for the future.

Mr. President, it is the right thing to do. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Cryer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.