



United States Senate

NEWS RELEASE

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IDAHO, MONTANA JOIN FORCES ON DOWNWINDER LEGISLATION *Crapo-Craig-Burns bill to include states under RECA*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Idaho Senator Mike Crapo joined with Montana Senator Conrad Burns today to introduce legislation to include both Idaho and Montana under a federal government program to compensate those showing medical evidence they were harmed by nuclear testing fallout in the 1950s and 1960s. Idaho Senator Larry Craig is an original co-sponsor of the bill that would amend the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) to include both states.

At present, so-called “downwinders” are now compensated only in parts of Utah, Nevada, and Arizona, although studies show some Idaho counties received among of the highest doses of radioactive fallout from the Nevada tests. The legislation introduced today builds on separate bills introduced that pertained to each state individually.

“Even though changes in the RECA program have been recommended, the faster course to compensation for victims of atomic tests may come through using the existing RECA model,” Crapo said. “I am continuing my efforts to work with Senators from a number of states to build momentum that will lead to compensation for victims in Idaho and many other states.”

“My colleagues and I are in the business of making Idahoans eligible for RECA compensation as expeditiously as possible,” Craig said. “Studies that take years will simply not do for citizens who would otherwise be eligible if they lived on the other side of a state line.”

The RECA act recognizes participants based on geography, but a report released by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) recommends Congress revise RECA to more accurately account for compensation so it is based on the medical history of applicants and not reliant on geographic designations. Crapo fears that some Idahoans may not be able to wait for changes to RECA, and thus he wants any Idahoans affected to be able to apply for compensation under the existing program while the new one is being framed.

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“We will pursue every avenue to include Idahoans and Montanans under RECA because we recognize the data that parts of our states sustained some of the highest radiation exposures,” Crapo added. “I again salute the leadership of those fighting for compensation who were unfortunately exposed to that radiation, such as Sheri Garmon from Emmett, who tragically did not live to see the conclusion of her effort. Time is of the essence when it comes to assisting victims of radiation caused by the government during the 1950s and 60s.”

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