

help children navigate our legal system, and better protect minors in government custody. I welcome my colleagues from either side of the aisle to join me. I would be more than happy to sit down with any of my colleagues to discuss solutions that would prevent child trafficking. Sadly, this bill does not accomplish that goal at all.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I think the esteemed chairman of the Judiciary Committee is misreading the bill because this would apply to people who are entering the United States. It would apply to those who are coming to the southern border.

This is a process that had been in place. The Biden administration chose to stop this process. What we understand is that they chose to stop this because the test takes 45 minutes—45 minutes to determine if that child is or is not related, 45 minutes to determine if that child should be left with those adults. Thirty percent of the children that are DNA-tested at that southern border are found to not be related to the adult who is holding them by the hand, who is bringing them into the country.

So I would ask my colleagues, is 45 minutes too much time to take to be sure that a child is secure?

We have had 10 million people come to that border. We have had 400,000 of those children. Don't we want to provide the best for these children and separate them from traffickers?

By the way, HHS has lost track of 85,000 of these children. They can't tell the Presiding Officer's committee where those children are. They can't tell the Judiciary Committee where those children are—85,000 children. We do not know if they are dead or alive. We do not know if they are being labor trafficked, sex trafficked. We do not know what is happening.

DNA testing is a way to help save some of these children. We should return to this policy.

By the way, again I will mention that H.R. 2 has been in here. The Homeland Security Committee has had 374 days to have a markup on a border security bill. They chose not to. The Judiciary Committee could have had a markup on a border security bill. They did not do it. But they are bringing a political stunt bill to the floor today to try to push it through to give cover to vulnerable Members of your party.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following my unanimous consent request, the following Senators be allowed to speak prior to the scheduled rollcall vote: Senator LANKFORD for up to 5 minutes, Senator SINEMA for up to 7 minutes, and Senator MURPHY for up to 7 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 4175

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, for over three decades, the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act—or RECA, as it is frequently described—has stood as a testament to our Nation's enduring commitment to righting the wrongs of the past. Where it has hurt someone, it wants to do something about it.

Since 1990, this vital program has distributed over \$2.4 billion to more than 38,000 individuals adversely affected by the fallout from atomic weapons testing and the uranium industry labor. These Americans suffered due to Federal activities and decisions beyond their control, enduring illnesses that spanned generations.

Yet, as we speak, RECA is on the brink of expiration. On June 10, just 18 days from now, unless we act, the Sun will set on a program that has provided essential relief to those still living with the horrific consequences of radiation exposure.

Among these are not only just the downwinders affected by nuclear tests but also the hard-working uranium miners, mill workers, and transporters contracted by the Federal Government in connection with Federal activities. Their suffering was part of the price of our national security during the Cold War, and their plight must not be forgotten.

So while we debate the merits and the potential expansions of RECA, it is unthinkable that we would interrupt access to aid for those currently suffering, those current beneficiaries, those currently eligible for RECA compensation. They consist of people whom no one disputes have been harmed. So we don't want to interrupt coverage to them simply because we are talking about who else might also need to be covered under this program.

The bill I propose is a clean extension of the existing program. It maintains the existing RECA framework, ensuring no disruption in access to compensation while we deliberate on how best to enhance and extend its reach. I don't dispute that it is appropriate to expand and extend its reach in certain respects because there are some people not currently covered by it, but, again, we don't want to harm those who are the current beneficiaries, and there is no reason why their coverage should lapse.

The proposal previously passed by the Senate to expand RECA includes regions and additional compensation claims in a variety of jurisdictions. In some of those instances, they are abundantly backed by data; in others, they are not. In some of those areas, there may be victims who are covered by other programs; in others, there may not be. Some of them are clearer than others. I think some of the clearest cases are those involving victims in the State of Missouri and in the State of New Mexico, and we will talk more about those in a little bit.

The current bill does have some challenging aspects to it—challenging from

the standpoint of moving forward toward passage. The bill as it stands risks inflating the deficit by at least \$60 billion—that is at the low end—and it may jeopardize the longevity of access to necessary resources for Americans who depend on RECA compensation for the reimbursement of costs associated with medical care or survivor benefits in the event a family member tragically passed away due to exposure.

That I will not do, and I am not alone. You see, the House of Representatives has thus far declined to take up and pass Senator HAWLEY's previous bill, with some signaling concern and raising some of the concerns that I just restated.

It is deeply troubling that amidst urgent need, we might find ourselves entangled in one form or another of brinkmanship, sitting on our hands, waiting for an unjustly expansive and unattainable bill—one that no one believes can be passed by the House. Expecting that that bill will be passed at the eleventh hour puts real lives at risk if what that means is that the existing RECA structure can't be reauthorized.

So I refuse to stand by and let the program lapse while we continue to search for a solution for legitimate victims in Missouri and New Mexico. We can't allow access to RECA's benefits to be held hostage during those negotiations.

Now, I, too, am in favor of some of the expansions, including and especially the expansion for New Mexico and for Missouri. I think those categories of would-be beneficiaries do need to be added. But we can't allow access to the benefits for the existing RECA beneficiaries to be held hostage during those.

But until we can iron out some of the details more carefully, it is no less imperative that we pass a straightforward extension that will allow support for the existing beneficiaries to continue without interruption. Those people haven't done anything wrong. There is no reason why they should be punished based on the fact that we haven't yet found a solution that can pass through both Houses of Congress and make it to the President's desk.

With the clock ticking down to just 18 days, less than 3 weeks before RECA expires, every moment that jeopardizes benefits for those suffering the consequences of our Nation's past actions is significant, and we should find that troubling. Now, these individuals do not have the luxury of time that seems at times so abundant in Washington. They need our help now, and they deserve swift and unencumbered continuation of access to the support that RECA provides while we work out the other issues.

I urge my colleagues in Congress to not allow RECA to lapse. Let's pass this clean reauthorization. Let's do it right now, and let's send a clear message that America takes care of its own.

To that end, Mr. President, as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration of S. 4175 and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; further, that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. HAWLEY. Reserving the right to object, Mr. President, I have literally grown hoarse coming to this floor defending the rights of Americans poisoned by their own government to be compensated by that government when, through no fault of their own, they have been exposed to nuclear radiation, nuclear waste, nuclear contamination in the soil, in the water, in the air.

I just listened to my friend from Utah describe this eleventh-hour bill after the Senate has spoken to this issue multiple times—multiple times. After that has been done, now my friend from Utah comes and says we need a clean extension—a clean extension—clean. There is nothing clean about this bill. No, it leaves Missouri filthy dirty with nuclear radiation.

Let's just remember how it happened. All the way back in the Manhattan Project, the U.S. Government used the city of St. Louis as a uranium processing site. And did the U.S. Government clean up the nuclear radiation after the fact? No, it did not. Did the U.S. Government warn the people of Missouri that they were, in fact, being poisoned by nuclear radiation? No, they did not.

What they did instead is they lied to the people of Missouri while the nuclear contamination seeped into our ground water, seeped into our soil. For 50 years and more, the people of St. Louis and St. Charles and large parts of my State have been exposed to nuclear radiation. We have the highest rates of breast cancer in the Nation in North St. Louis County. Entire schools cannot go to school because their classrooms are filled with nuclear radioactive material.

What has the Federal Government done? Not a thing. What would this bill do? Not a thing. Would it clean it up? No. Would it clean the lungs of the survivors who even now are dying from the poison they have been exposed to? No. Would it clean the areas of the Navajo Nation that have been overrun with nuclear radiation? No. Would it clean the mines that our veterans went to for decades exposed to nuclear radiation? No.

No, it would do none of these things.

This bill, I think, partakes of an entirely different philosophy, the philosophy expressed by the junior Senator from Utah, Mr. ROMNEY, who said recently it is too expensive for the Federal Government to actually make right what it has done to all these good

Americans for decades on end. No, instead what we need to do is pass this bill that the senior Senator from Utah is now advocating. It is a small fraction, he says. He is right about that. And it is reserved for those individuals who have been determined to have actually suffered.

Let's just be clear. If you live in Missouri, you are not deemed to have actually suffered under this legislation. If you live in New Mexico, you are not deemed to have actually suffered under this legislation. Heck, if you live in Utah, you are not deemed to have actually suffered. Is there any expansion for the State of Utah in the legislation proposed by the senior Senator? No, there is not.

Mr. President, we have been here before. We have been here for months. We have been here going on years now. Senator LUJÁN and I have passed through this Chamber—not once but twice—legislation that would reauthorize this critical program and finally do justice to the hundreds of thousands of Americans poisoned by their own government. And this body has passed it twice. The last time by 70 votes.

The time now is to act. It is not the time for further delay. It is not the time to look away. It is not the time to change the subject. It is the time for the House to act.

Study after study has shown the expanse of the nuclear radiation. Here is a study from 1997, from 2005, another from 2005, from 2023, all showing that the nuclear radiation is far beyond the contours of the original RECA bill passed in 1990. Yet my friend from Utah wants to keep doing the same old thing, leaving out in the cold hundreds of thousands of Americans.

I will not consent to it, Mr. President. This body will not consent to it. We have been here before. We have had this debate. We have settled it, and this is not the time to reopen it. This is the time for the House to act, no more excuses, no more delays, no more changing of the subject, no more blaming of the victims. This is the time to stand up and be counted for the House to act.

Before I object, Mr. President—and I am going to object—I want to yield to my friend, the Senator from New Mexico, who has been such a champion in the fight.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. LUJÁN. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act yet again.

I appreciate this opportunity because as I have learned, every opportunity we get to talk about the families, to share the stories of the families who are dying of cancer and suffering—for the Federal Government has ignored them for decades—we are able to earn one more vote, one more Member who will stand courageously in that well and say: We can do the right thing, and we can ensure that we are going to provide

support and coverage for these families.

I come to the floor today to share the same concerns as my friend Senator HAWLEY. I have proudly been working on the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act since I was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2009. Prior to that, my predecessor in the Senate and in the House, Tom Udall, was working on this policy and these issues. I have had the honor of speaking with the late Senator Orrin Hatch—may he rest in peace—about the faults that were made when this legislation was passed in 1990 and amended in 2000, of the families that were left out.

After we hear about this approach, we get a chance to talk a little bit more about another idea, and I hope to be able to share some quotes from Senator Orrin Hatch about how we should be working together.

But today, Mr. President, for this portion, I want to share the story of Mary Dickson. Mary grew up in the fallout of nuclear testing. She lived downwind of the Nevada test site where an estimated 100 nuclear tests were detonated above ground.

She has said that all around these testing sites, Utah families were going about their daily lives, drinking milk from the local dairies, eating vegetables from the gardens that they tended to. Heck, the kids would even mix sugar with snow so they could pretend it was ice cream, she wrote.

In my home State of New Mexico, where the first bomb was tested at the Trinity Test Site just miles from the town of Ruidoso and Tularosa, kids at summer camp not only heard the terrifying sounds of the bomb but saw the white ash falling down from the sky. Those kids thought it was snow as well. They went out and played in it because there was no warning. As a matter of fact, the U.S. Government did something worse. They lied to these families and said it was just a drop of munitions. These kids were playing in radioactive waste. These kids ate radioactive waste.

Some of these kids are now adults fighting for their lives. Far too many of these adults face cancer diagnoses. Many face a diagnosis that was similar to their parents or their siblings or their grandparents or their neighbors. Mary faced her diagnosis at 30. Others gave birth to babies with birth defects. Far too many died far too young.

The Senator from Utah and I agree that the people of Utah deserve justice. I and others, like Senator HAWLEY, agree that those impacted in other States deserve justice as well. Today's exercise is not the answer.

The Senate has already acted twice—once to amend the National Defense Authorization Act with Democrats and Republicans, 61 votes strong. The same people that once said that the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act could not pass through the legislative branch—through the House or through

the Senate—they were taken aback that there was this enormous vote and success only a few months later to see another bill authored by Senator HAWLEY that I was proud to work with him on with the advocates. The advocates should be at the table as we are having these deliberations. Where are their voices?

Sixty-nine votes said yes. Now it sits in the U.S. House of Representatives, where recently even Speaker JOHNSON's office commented on taking action to make sure that this program will not die. I appreciate that.

I certainly hope that the families I have had the honor of meeting with, that I know Senator HAWLEY has met with, that all Senators share and agree that we should take further action on the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act meet with them as well.

I hope the Senators start with Mary Dickson. Learn her stories. Invite her in. Get to know her, her advocacy, her plight because by learning her story, we are going to help countless others all across America. I strongly urge my colleagues to stand with all the victims.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, for a year now, Senator LUJÁN and I have been coming to this floor and warning—warning—that the Radiation Exposure Act is going to expire. And that is why this body took action, not once but twice, in overwhelming bipartisan fashion to expand and extend RECA in a way that does justice to every American, every veteran who has been poisoned by their own government. And now it is incumbent upon the House to act.

I want to be clear. I will not consent to any short-term stopgap, any half-way measure. I will not give my consent to it.

It will not pass this floor with my consent. This body has acted. This body has spoken. And there can be no turning back now. We are not going to turn our backs on the victims, not any longer. It has been 50 years in the State of Missouri. It has been just as long in New Mexico. It has been just as long for the Navajo Nation. It has been just as long for the uranium miners, our veterans.

There can be no going back now, and so I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Utah.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 4403

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I deeply appreciate the insights offered today by my friends and colleagues, and that they truly are. The senior Senator from Missouri and the junior Senator from New Mexico have made an impassioned plea—an impassioned plea that I am deeply sympathetic to for a variety of reasons, including and especially the fact that they are both right as to their respective States. The folks in Mis-

souri deserve to have this coverage, and so do people in New Mexico. There are also additional people not covered by the existing program in Utah who need to be covered.

In all three instances with respect to Utah, New Mexico, and Missouri, we need to get this done. You know, taking into account all of the arguments that they have made and the evidence that I have reviewed, I am prepared to do what it takes, and I am prepared to get this done today.

As I mentioned, this isn't just an abstract concept to me; this is near and dear to my heart. Many people I know and love have had their lives altered and, in many cases, ended by exposure to downwind radiation.

One of those people was a loving husband and father who raised seven children, who was taken at the prime of his life, at the peak of his career, just days after his 61st birthday, as he was surrounded by his wife and their seven children, one of whom stands at this desk today.

My father died from this in 1996, just 28 years ago, and we didn't know at the time—didn't know until years after that he had, in fact, been a victim of and then died of a cancer linked to his exposure as a child growing up in eastern Arizona, spending his summers in Reserve, NM, a small sawmill camp where his family lived each summer. He was exposed to downwind radiation, and that led to his untimely death.

My dad would be nearly 90 if he were alive today, and I can only imagine the youth and the vitality we would still see in him. I am convinced he would still be practicing law. I am convinced he would still be a runner. His life and that of so many others in Utah, Missouri, and New Mexico have been cut tragically short by this exposure, which is why we need to get this done.

So, look, in light of these concerns and the political realities we face, again, I want to make sure that RECA doesn't lapse, and so I want to offer an updated version of the Downwinders Act.

This bill would extend the benefits of the program to those in Missouri exposed to the hazards of improperly stored nuclear waste, while also addressing the historical oversights in New Mexico and in parts of Utah.

When we look at this, we have to do this to make sure that we are following the science, and in all three of those areas, the science is backed up, and in all three of those jurisdictions, not only does the science back it up, but there aren't other government programs that may overlap with it that provide this compensation.

Remember, if this were not the U.S. Government doing it, this would ultimately be some species of tort law. But because it is the U.S. Government and the U.S. Government, as a sovereign entity—you can't just sue it unless the U.S. Government makes itself amenable to suit, and that is really where RECA came in. Because of the fact that

we are uniquely situated, both by virtue of what the science currently backs up and the absence of other programs to do it, I think it makes sense to accord that to these States.

The other States covered by the legislation now pending in the House, that is stalled out in the House—it passed here, and so that is done. It has moved on from this Chamber. One of the reasons that I understand why it stalled out in the House is because of cost.

Now, I am not aware of the full context of the quote provided by my colleague from Utah in that quote. I don't know whether there was more context there or not. But if that was the whole context, I don't share that approach. I don't share that sentiment. In other words, we don't not do this just because it is expensive. The whole thing is expensive. The loss of life is expensive, and we need to address that.

The issue is, again, one, whether and to what extent claims are backed up by the science and whether and to what extent there are other programs that already cover it in one way or another, such that the bill adequately addresses that.

There are other States in that legislation pending in the House that deal with law in the Marshall Islands, Idaho, Kentucky, Ohio, Alaska, and perhaps one or two other jurisdictions. The claims of those States are not on equal footing. They are different from these claims. The Utah and New Mexico claims are very similar. They stem from the same sequence of events related primarily to exposure to downwind radiation from the atomic weapons testing. In Missouri, they are a little bit different, but they share enough of the same elements, and they are similarly backed by science. In these other jurisdictions, it is a little bit different.

That is where a lot of the—not all but a lot of the expense is accrued and a lot of concerns expressed in the House impeding its quick passage over there that might lead to it not being able to be passed at all.

But, again, look, to ensure we do our due diligence here, where there is uncertainty as to some of the other jurisdictions covered by that bill now pending in the House, my bill that I am offering now includes a requirement that the Federal Government must study and report on other regions that should be eligible for compensation.

We need to get this done. I will continue to fight for the recognition and compensation of all those exposed to radiation through no fault of their own because it is the right thing to do regardless of cost.

With the clock ticking down to just 18 days before RECA expires, every moment that jeopardizes benefits for those suffering the consequences of our Nation's past actions is significant. We can't ignore it. These individuals do not have the luxury of time that seems so abundant here in Washington; they need our help now. They deserve swift