

Rocky Flats Coalition of Local Governments

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April 8, 2005

The Honorable Mike Enzi, Chairman
The Honorable Edward Kennedy, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6300

RE: S. 585, "The Rocky Flats Special Exposure Cohort Act"

Dear Chairman Enzi Ranking Member Kennedy:

The Rocky Flats Coalition of Local Governments is writing in support of S. 585, "The Rocky Flats Special Exposure Cohort Act" and requests that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions schedule a hearing on this time-sensitive legislation.

This bill addresses a fundamental flaw in the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation and Program Act (EEOICPA) which has prevented current and former workers at the Department of Energy's Rocky Flats site from being compensated for illnesses contracted while in the service of their country. Through the EEOICPA, Congress intended to help take care of these sick workers and their families. However, as Congress has become well aware, there have been numerous problems in implementing the EEOICPA, particularly in reconstructing worker radiation exposure received while working at Rocky Flats. These problems have resulted, in part, in workers being unable to prove their illness was a direct and proximate result of their work at Rocky Flats.

Under this bill the hurdle of proving causation would be eliminated as employees who have contracted one of the 22 cancers identified in the EEOICPA would automatically qualify for compensation. In approving this legislation, Congress would therefore not be creating new benefits, but rather would be ensuring that those for whom these benefits were intended would receive just compensation.

The Rocky Flats Coalition of Local Governments consists of elected officials from the seven municipal governments that surround the Rocky Flats site. These workers are our constituents and were at ground zero in helping to win the Cold War. Just as we have always supported the Rocky Flats workers, we have also supported Congress's efforts to address their ongoing health needs. We remain concerned that worker benefits continue to be delayed, especially as closure of Rocky Flats is rapidly approaching.

We therefore respectfully request that the Committee provide a hearing on this legislation and we urge swift passage of S. 585.

Sincerely,

/s/

Shaun McGrath
Chairman

Cc: Senator Ken Salazar
Senator Wayne Allard
Representative Mark Udall
Representative Bob Beauprez
Samuel Bodman, Secretary of Energy
Elaine Chao, Secretary of Labor
Michael Leavitt, Secretary of Health and Human Services
Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board