

upcoming third career as retired citizen, where she is sure to continue serving the people with energy, distinction, and talent.

SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF NATIONAL BLACK HIV/AIDS AWARENESS DAY

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 5, 2007

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of H. Con. Res. 35—Supporting the goals and ideals of National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. While we do not yet have a cure, and HIV/AIDS continues to consume the lives of Black people, their values and their worth here in the United States and in other parts of the world, we know Black AIDS Day can help to mobilize our communities to help shift and turn this epidemic around.

In the past decades and sadly still today, HIV infection rates continue to escalate at an alarming pace among Black men and women as shown by reports year after year. Although Blacks make up around 13 percent of the population of the United States, they represent 49 percent of the total AIDS cases reported in this country, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Sixty-four percent of all American women living with HIV/AIDS are black, and this disease has become the leading cause of death for black women ages 25 to 34. Every day, 72 African Americans are infected with HIV in the U.S.

While poverty plays a role and access to health care and lack of information are factors, we cannot deny that the main reason for this plague is the silence, the closed-mouth social conservatism, of a people still ill at ease discussing sexuality, homosexuality, drug use and other realities. Instead, we mouth piety, prayers and platitudes.

We now recognize National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, as declared six years ago by the Community Capacity Building Coalition, an affiliate of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and we cannot remain still. We must work together to ensure that programs for prevention remain adequately funded and that programs such as Ryan White CARE Act can be used for early detection of HIV so we can use all tools available to us to fight this epidemic. Everyone should be encouraged to get tested for HIV, learn more about the disease and how it is transmitted, seek medical advice if infected, and become involved in local community efforts to educate people and fight this disease.

It is also important that Blacks are at the forefront of clinical research to achieve culturally appropriate results for treatment in our communities. Some of the biggest challenges we face, particularly in the Black community today are the misperceptions of and lack of knowledge about HIV/AIDS, and fear related to clinical research.

I encourage my colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus and the rest of Congress to stay committed in their effort in whatever way possible to combat this epidemic which has taken too many lives, too early, and unnecessarily.

INTRODUCTION OF ROCKY FLATS SPECIAL EXPOSURE COHORT ACT

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 7, 2007

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Madam Speaker, I am today again introducing a bill to make it more likely that red tape and missing documents will not frustrate Congress's attempt to provide compensation and care for some nuclear-weapons workers made sick by on-the-job exposure to radiation.

The bill is cosponsored by my colleague from Colorado, Mr. PERLMUTTER. I appreciate his support and that of Senator KEN SALAZAR, who is introducing a similar bill in the Senate.

The bill would revise the part of the Energy Employees Occupational Injury Compensation Act ("the Act") that specifies which covered workers are part of what the law designates as the "Special Exposure Cohort."

The revision would extend this "special exposure cohort" status to Department of Energy employees, Department of Energy contractor employees, or atomic weapons employees—all terms defined by the current law—who worked at the Rocky Flats site, in Colorado, for at least 250 days prior to January 1, 2006.

The result would be to help provide the Act's benefits to any of those workers who contracted a radiation-linked cancer specified in the Act after beginning employment at Rocky Flats.

As the law now stands, before a Rocky Flats worker suffering from a covered cancer can receive benefits, it must be established that the cancer is as likely as not to have resulted from on-the-job exposure to radiation.

That sounds like a reasonable requirement—and it would be appropriate for Rocky Flats if we had adequate documentation of radiation exposures for the years when it was producing nuclear-weapons components as well as for the more recent time when DOE and its contractors have been working to clean it up and prepare it for closure.

However, in fact there were serious shortcomings in the monitoring of Rocky Flats workers' radiation exposures and in the necessary recordkeeping—to say nothing of the slowness of the current administrative process for making the required determinations concerning links between exposure and employment.

So there is a risk that a significant number of Rocky Flats workers who should be able to benefit from the Act will not obtain its benefits in a timely manner or will be denied them entirely.

The bill would prevent this miscarriage of justice, by recognizing that Rocky Flats workers have been plagued by the same kinds of administrative problems that entangled workers at some other locations—administrative problems that were addressed through inclusion in the Act of the provisions related to the "Special Exposure Cohort."

My understating of the need for this bill came from meeting with Rocky Flats workers and their representatives and by consulting experts. I have particularly benefited from the great experience and expertise of Dr. Robert Bistline. Dr. Bistline has served as Program Manager of the Energy Department's Oversight of Radiation Protection Program at the

Rocky Flats field office and has few if any peers in terms of his understanding of the problems addressed by the bill.

In particular, the bill reflects these aspects of Rocky Flats history—

Many worker exposures were unmonitored over the plant's history. For some, estimated doses were assigned, and radiation exposures for many others are missing. As a result, there are at best incomplete records and many inaccuracies in the exposure records that do exist.

No lung counter for detecting and measuring plutonium and americium in the lungs existed at Rocky Flats until the late 1960s. Without this equipment the very insoluble oxide forms of plutonium cannot be detected and a large number of workers had inhalation exposures that went undetected and unmeasured.

Exposure to neutron radiation was not monitored until the late 1950s and most of those measurements through 1970 have been found to be in error. In some areas of the plant the neutron doses were as much as 2 to 10 times as great as the gamma doses received by workers but only gamma doses were recorded.

As a result of these and other shortcomings, some Rocky Flats workers have been denied compensation under the Act despite having worked with tons of plutonium and having known exposures leading to serious health effects.

Since early in my tenure in Congress I have worked to make good on promises of a fairer deal for the nuclear-weapons workers who helped America win the Cold War. That was why enactment and improvement of the compensation Act has been one of my top priorities. I saw this as a very important matter for our country—and especially for many Coloradans because our state is home to the Rocky Flats site, which for decades was a key part of the nuclear-weapons complex.

Now the site's military mission has ended and the last of the Rocky Flats workers have completed the job of cleaning it up for closure. And just as they worked to take care of the site, we in Congress need to take care of them and the others who worked there in the past.

That was the purpose of the compensation act. I am very proud that I was able to help achieve its enactment, but I am also aware that it is not perfect. The bill being introduced today will not remedy all the shortcomings of the current law, but it will make it better.

For the benefit of our colleague, I am attaching an outline of the bill's provisions.

OUTLINE OF ROCKY FLATS SPECIAL COHORT BILL

Section 1: Short Title, Findings, and Purpose

Subsection (a) provides a short title, "Rocky Flats Special Cohort Act."

Subsection (b) sets forth several findings regarding the need for the legislation.

Subsection (c) states the bill's purpose: "to revise the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Act of 2000 to include certain past Rocky Flats workers as members of the special exposure cohort."

Section 2: Definition of Member of Special Exposure Cohort

Subsection (a) amends section 3621(14) of the Energy Employees Occupational Injury Compensation Act (EEOICPA). The effect of the amendment is to provide that a person