

April 30th, 1996

The Honorable Congress Member Terry Everett
Chairman, Subcommittee on Compensation, Pension,
Insurance and Memorial Affairs

and

The Honorable Congress Member Lane Evans
Ranking Democratic Member of Subcommittee on Compensation,
Pension, Insurance and Memorial Affairs

**TESTIMONY OF ACIE LEE BYRD, JR.
ON BEHALF OF THE ATOMIC VETERANS WORKING GROUP**

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which consists of the principle three organized Atomic Veteran Associations:

- a) The Alliance of Atomic Veterans;
- b) National Association of Atomic Veterans;
- c) National Association of Radiation Survivors

On February 26, 1996 the three groups formulated a collective position that reflects our common concerns regarding the medical conditions of the nation's atomic veterans; and the inadequate remedies developed by the United States Government, thus far.

We have drawn from over three decades of discussions, pain and suffering, scientific research, legislative hearing, a body of principles and remedial proposal, which we feel reflects the collective wisdom and experience of the atomic veterans and their families of our great country. We would like to, respectfully, submit the following ten (10) points for your review and deliberation:

ATOMIC VETERANS' WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

1. All radiation victims be compensated for the same radiogenic illnesses and in the same amount -- regardless of site of exposure and that all such illnesses be presumptive.
2. That all classified service and medical records of atomic veterans be immediately declassified. (Proof can be furnished of two sets of medical records for atomic veterans.)
3. The 11 other additional radiation risk activities revealed by the Veterans Affairs Committee on Environmental Hazards, August 1993, be included for consideration in the existing laws and any future laws pertaining to atomic veterans, without time constraints.
4. That the radioepidemiological tables be eliminated as a source of reliance by the VA in determining a veteran's/survivor's entitlement to service connection.
5. We recommend that all persons covered under RECA be awarded the highest sum (\$100,000) now awarded only to uranium miners, with no offsets or restrictions.
6. After all radiogenic illnesses listed in P.L. 98-542 have become presumptive--that P.L. 98-542 be repealed in its entirety. That any illnesses determined by a competent physician to be radiogenic, shall be added to the presumptive list.
7. That survivors of Atomic Veterans who did not receive care in military or VA hospitals/clinics, be awarded monetary sums expended by them for the care, treatment, hospitalization and other expenses suffered by those survivors in today's dollars. That all survivors receive compensation for loss of earnings and other expenses incurred as a result of the veteran's fatal illness, if the veteran died of a disability as listed in P.L. 100-321-102-578 or any illness found to be radiogenic in the future. That this remuneration (as suggested in the Report of the Advisory Committee) be in addition to DIC (survivors' benefits) and not subject to any other offset for Social Security benefits or governmental benefits received as a result of the veteran's illness. Priority care in VA hospitals must be on a continuing basis and not subject to yearly renewal.
8. Onsite presence at a test site will be presumed for compensation purposes in the absence of evidence to the contrary.
9. That a registry be established for the offspring of atomic veterans who may have developed genetic health problems as a result of his/her parents' or grandparents' exposure to ionizing radiation, and compensation paid for their care.
10. Atomic veterans must be accorded positions on the Bioethics Committee and any future committees related to exposure to ionizing radiation.

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