**Senator Tom Udall**

**July 16, 2020**

**WE CAN HONOR THE TULAROSA BASIN DOWNWINDERS ON THE 75TH ANNIVERSITY OF THE TRINITY TEST BY MAKING SURE THEY AND THEIR DESCENDANTS RECEIVE THE COMPENSATION THEY DESERVE**

Today marks the 75th anniversary of the Trinity nuclear test. For years, I have fought to expand the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) and provide compensation to all New Mexicans, Tribal members, and families throughout the country – including the Tularosa downwinders – impacted by exposure to radiation from nuclear testing and uranium mining undertaken for our national security.

Let us mark this solemn anniversary by lifting up the voices and stories of the often-forgotten victims of our nation’s nuclear weapons program. Seventy-five years after the first nuclear bomb was detonated at Trinity, downwind communities in New Mexico are still bearing the steep cost of our government’s unwillingness to address the wrongs it committed against its own citizens in the name of national security. Far too many Tularosa Basin residents and southern New Mexico communities have suffered, lost their lives, or lost loved ones because of the radiation that contaminated the air, land and water.

Our government should have warned residents that they were in the path of harmful radiation. Our government should have prevented communities from being touched by the radioactive debris that looked like snow, only to develop cancer for successive generations. And, after Trinity, our government should have launched a serious, scientific effort to assess the harm done to downwind communities and their descendants. But in 1945 – and in the decades since – our government fell and continues to fall short. In 2020, we must do better.

I’ve been proud to be in this fight for a long time, since the late 1970’s when my father, Stewart Udall, took up the cause of uranium miners and millers and downwinders. In the courts and in Congress, we’ve fought to make whole those who fell victim to radiation exposure at the hands of their own government. And I won’t stop fighting until we get this done.

My father helped lay the groundwork for passage of RECA in 1990. But the original legislation left out many impacted by radiation from testing and mining – including the Tularosa downwinders and the post-1971 uranium workers. Since 2010, when I was in the House of Representatives, I have introduced bipartisan legislation to close that loophole and I continue to fight for just compensation for these victims in the Senate.

It has been an immense privilege to meet downwinders who demonstrate incredible resilience and strength. Their stories inspire us all to fight for justice—to close the loopholes in RECA to include downwinders and the post-1971 uranium workers—and address their pain caused by the radiation unleashed in 1945 and after. Today, we must honor those who lost their lives and sacrificed their health to the Trinity test by remembering their stories, but most importantly, by giving these downwinders and post-1971 uranium workers and their descendants the health care and compensation they deserve.