

## **We Should Learn From Our Own History: Say “NO” to More Nuclear Testing**

**Representative Trisha Beck  
Representative Becky Edwards**

Today, Representative Becky Edwards and I would like to tell you a story—a story of nuclear weapons detonations and the undeserved and tremendous amounts of suffering they caused to Utahns living downwind.

Rep. Edwards and I are also proud to present you with the opportunity to change the ending of this story—to ensure our children and grandchildren will never have to endure the suffering caused by nuclear testing. We have before us an opportunity to support the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which would ban all nuclear weapons test detonations. The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty would not only protect and preserve the best interests of Utahns, but would continue our state’s legacy of acting in the best national security interests of our great country.

This is a story about lessons we can learn from our own history. It is a story about the dangers of nuclear weapons testing. Honoring this story gives us the chance to do better NOW.

Years ago while visiting with my neighbor and friend at the University of Utah Hospital, she related to me the story of her childhood in Cedar City. She told me how she and her father and siblings would sit on the hillside and watch nuclear bombs explode at the Nevada Test Site. Eventually, each one of them passed away from diseases caused by exposure to radioactive fallout. In 1997, I was appointed to the Utah State Legislature when another friend of mine, Representative Kurt Oscarson, passed away from leukemia most likely caused by the same exposure. His brother also passed away from leukemia a few years later, both “downwinders” to nuclear testing.

Unfortunately, this is not an uncommon tale. It relates a shared trauma suffered by the “Downwinders,” those living in the prevailing wind pattern around the Nevada Test Site. The U.S. conducted over 1000 tests of nuclear weapons over the years, most of them at this site. Thousands of people were affected, many of them suffering and eventually dying from simple proximity.

In the years from 1951 to 1992, the U.S. believed it necessary to test nuclear weapons, and to build an enormous stockpile of those weapons. At the time, we did not know all that much about testing nuclear weapons; we believed testing was both necessary and safe. At first, we believed it was safe to put on some sunglasses and watch from a distance; then we believed it was safe to explode nuclear weapons underground.

Those days are over. The Cold War ended the arms race, leaving roughly 23,000 nuclear weapons. After enduring much human and environmental damage that will go on for hundreds of years, we have accepted that there is no safe way to detonate nuclear weapons.

The U.S. can ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which would establish a global ban on nuclear weapons explosions for the purposes of testing. Ratification of the CTBT is in the United States best interest. The U.S. currently has the most advanced nuclear weapons arsenal in the world and can successfully maintain the reliability of the arsenal using computer simulations and modeling which is acceptable under the nuclear test ban treaty. U.S. ratification of the treaty would clearly demonstrate renewed leadership on the world’s most pressing security threat--stopping the spread of nuclear weapons.

CTBT has widespread support: it has been signed by 182 nations and ratified by 151, including all NATO countries and other key U.S. allies. An array of bi-partisan military experts and senior statesmen support

the CTBT. In 2007, former Secretaries of State George Shultz and Henry Kissinger, former Secretary of Defense William Perry, and former Senator Sam Nunn (GA), called for the Senate to ratify the treaty. Former chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—including Generals John Shalikashvili, Colin Powell, David Jones, Admiral William Crowe, and Defense Secretary Robert Gates —also support CTBT.

Today, we have a chance to change the ending of this story-and save the lives of our friends and neighbors.

The U.S. hasn't tested a nuclear weapon by detonating it in nearly 20 years. The U.S. has no need to resume nuclear weapons explosions for the purposes of testing, nor is there political support for renewed U.S. nuclear testing. We now have the ability to test nuclear weapons by resorting to computer simulations and complex models. These computer methods, which are allowed by the CTBT, will continue to verify the reliability and safety our important nuclear weapons deterrent in the absence of the dangerous and unnecessary detonation of nuclear weapons at the Nevada Test Site.

The United States currently has the largest and the most advanced stockpile of nuclear weapons on earth. Ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in no way compromises the reliability, safety, or security of that stockpile. What the CTBT does do is ensure that the Utahns living downwind of the Nevada Test Site never again have their safety or security compromised by what is now the unnecessary practice of exploding nuclear weapons for the purpose of testing.

**It is time for the United States to ratify this treaty, permanently ending nuclear test explosions worldwide.**

**It is time for the Utah House of Representatives to support this action by voting on H.R. 4 today. Please join Rep. Becky Edwards, myself, and thousands of Utahns who support this principled action.**