Bombs in our Backyard: Compensation for Nuclear Harm

Watch the recording here

Panelists: Moderated panel discussion with Susan Gordon, Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment; and Tina Cordova, Co-founder, Tularosa Basin Downwinders Consortium. Sam Blake, WILL Program Manager moderated the discussion.

Problem: From 1945 to 1962, the United States government implemented a massive program conducting hundreds of atmospheric nuclear weapons tests. Uranium mining and processing began in many areas, especially in the Western states, to fuel the development of the nuclear arsenal. As a result, individuals living near atmospheric testing sites, workers in uranium mining and processing, and military service members were exposed to radiation. People throughout the western states have suffered and continue to suffer serious health consequences from exposure to fallout from past explosive nuclear testing.

Based on the conversation, our panelists had the following policy recommendations:

- **Push Congress to pass the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) expansion bill.** RECA is the best first step in righting the wrongs of the past and getting compensation to those who were exposed to radiation. Partial restitution is not compensation; it offers some level of restorative justice, but it cannot erase or account for the intergenerational harm caused to Downwinder communities. For Downwinders facing serious health problems, the current RECA program is the difference between living in poverty or not, and the diagnosis usually comes late and requires travel for care.

- **Push Congress to end the nuclear weapons program.** There are no winners in resuming nuclear weapons testing. We need to stand strong in putting the health and wellbeing of our people ahead of these processes.