

During his campaign, Gabe Vasquez pledged to support compensation for New Mexicans exposed to radiation from nuclear testing, but once elected to Congress, he voted against compensation. Gabe Vasquez says one thing while campaigning and then votes the other way in Congress.

On July 3, 2025, Vasquez Voted Against The Working Families Tax Cuts Which Reauthorized And Significantly Expanded RECA.

“U.S. Senator Josh Hawley (R-Mo.) announced today that the largest expansion to date of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act has been included in the text of the ‘Big, Beautiful Bill.’ This historic provision is a victory for nuclear radiation survivors in Missouri and across America—and a major win for the Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) movement. ‘The federal government dumped nuclear waste in the backyards of Missourians for decades—and then lied about it. These survivors sacrificed their health for our national security at the advent of the Manhattan Project, and their children and grandchildren have borne the burden of radioactive-linked illness for generations since. Reviving RECA means acknowledging the debts we owe these good Americans and delivering them the justice and overdue compensation they deserve,’ said Senator Hawley. Today’s announcement comes as Senator Hawley has fought to reauthorize RECA after the program’s compensation funds went dark a year ago due to congressional leadership’s inaction. The expanded RECA provision, which includes multiple bipartisan wins, would: Add eligibility for RECA compensation for residents of affected areas in Missouri, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Alaska who were exposed to contamination and developed cancers. Fully cover existing RECA-eligible ‘downwind’ areas and on-site participants, such as military personnel. These areas currently include regions of Nevada, Utah, and Arizona. Fully cover all existing RECA uranium mine workers. Add new ‘downwind’ areas for claimants: the state of New Mexico, remaining counties in Utah, plus Mohave County in Arizona. Increase benefit levels for atmospheric testing survivors to track inflation. Add new uranium mine workers who worked in mines from 1971-1990, add core drillers as an eligible worker, and expand eligible diseases. For over two years, Senator Hawley has led the fight to secure funding for survivors of nuclear contamination across the country, having twice passed a reauthorization bill through the Senate in July 2023 and March 2024. This reauthorization bill would revive RECA for survivors, allow claimants from across the country to receive life-saving assistance, and protect the program for years to come.” ([H.R. 1](#), Roll Call 190, Passed 218 – 214 R 218 – 2, D O – 212, [Cuellar Voted Nay](#), 7/3/25; Josh Hawley, [Press Release](#), 6/12/25)

On August 15, 2024, Source NM Reported That Vasquez Gathered With House Democrats In Albuquerque For A Campaign Rally And Called On Speaker Johnson To Give The RECA Bill A Vote Before The General Election.

“Amid increasing Democratic criticism, Republican Congressional candidate Yvette Herrell said Wednesday that she is broadly supportive of extending and expanding the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act, including the \$50 billion bill that sits unheard on GOP House Speaker Mike Johnson’s desk. Herrell is seeking to reclaim her House seat from incumbent Democrat Gabe Vasquez in one of the nation’s most hotly contested elections. She told Source New Mexico on Wednesday that she believes RECA should be expanded. ‘I will support any and all of the efforts,’ Herrell said. ‘I think there’s a responsibility from the government, the federal government, to the downwinders and the uranium workers.’ She said the program should be expanded to downwinders in New Mexico and multiple states who haven’t been compensated, and uranium mine workers exposed after 1971. Among those deserving, she said, are downwinders in Guam, who were exposed to nuclear weapons testing between the 1940s and 1960s. A group of House Democrats, including Vasquez, gathered Tuesday evening in Albuquerque for a campaign rally, calling on Johnson to give the RECA bill a vote before the general election. Johnson in late May announced he would not bring to a vote a bill extending RECA, citing the price tag.” (Patrick Lohmann, “Herrell Affirms Support For RECA Expansion, As NM Dems Criticize GOP House Leaders For Inaction,” [SourceNM](#), 8/15/24)

At The Rally, Vasquez Stated That The Refusal To Support The Reauthorization And Expansion Of RECA Is Not A Failure Of Government, But A Deliberate Disregard For The Suffering Of New Mexicans For Generations. “Vasquez and other House Democrats also criticized Herrell. He alleged she didn’t support the RECA expansion for New Mexico downwinders, which Herrell denies. Democrats also said she was unwilling to hold Johnson’s feet to the fire about

the issue. ‘What action do you think Yvette Herrell will take when she’s in Congress, supported and endorsed by the very person who is blocking this legislation?’ Vasquez told the crowd at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center. ‘The refusal to support the reauthorization and expansion of this critical act is not a failure of government, but a deliberate disregard for the suffering of New Mexicans for generations.’ (Patrick Lohmann, “Herrell Affirms Support For RECA Expansion, As NM Dems Criticize GOP House Leaders For Inaction,” [SourceNM](#), 8/15/24)

On December 1, 2023, Vasquez Stated In A Press Release That New Mexico Suffered Greatly Because Of Nuclear Testing, That They Must Ensure New Mexico’s Downwinders Receive The Compensation They Deserve, And That He Co-Sponsored The Radiation Exposure Compensation Act. “WASHINGTON, D.C. – On Friday, December 1, 2023, ahead of the release of the final National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), U.S. Representative Gabe Vasquez (NM-02) urges Congress to ensure the expansion of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) stays in the NDAA. ‘We’ll never forget that New Mexico was the first U.S. nuclear testing site, and our communities and loved ones have suffered greatly because of it. It’s long overdue that the rest of the country remembers this as well,” said Rep. Vasquez. “We must ensure New Mexico’s downwinders receive the compensation they rightfully deserve. That’s why I am a proud co-sponsor of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act and I urge Congress to pass the expansion and compensate New Mexico’s downwinders.’ RECA provides a one-time benefit payment to individuals who may have developed cancer or other diseases after being exposed to radiation from atomic weapons testing or uranium mining, milling or transporting. The program was originally passed in 1990, but is scheduled to end in 2024. Vasquez applauds the new amendment that recently passed the U.S. Senate in the National Defense Authorization Act that updates the current program by expanding eligibility to include then-residents of Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah. This legislation would also expand eligibility for individuals working in uranium mines, mills or transporting uranium ore after 1971. Ahead of the release of the final NDAA, Vasquez praises the expansion and urges Congress to ensure the expansion of RECA stays in the final NDAA.” (Gabe Vasquez, [Press Release](#), 12/1/23)

On December 8, 2023, Vasquez Stated In A Press Release That He Was Disappointed In House Republicans For Stripping The Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) Out Of The National Defense Authorization Act. “On Friday, December 1, 2023, U.S. Representative Gabe Vasquez (NM-02) voiced his disappointment in House Republicans for stripping the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) out of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). ‘House Republicans chose to willfully ignore Americans who deserve compensation from radiation exposure and have been waiting for justice from the federal government for decades. It’s truly a shame that RECA reform, despite being a strong, bipartisan effort, was stripped from the NDAA by Republican leadership. This is the closest RECA has ever come to becoming law with bipartisan support, and we will continue to work for New Mexico’s downwinders and their families,’ said Rep. Vasquez. ‘I’m all in on this fight, and I’m going to continue to work with my colleagues to get New Mexico’s downwinders the compensation they’ve been owed for far too long.’ RECA provides a one-time benefit payment to individuals who may have developed cancer or other diseases after being exposed to radiation from atomic weapons testing or uranium mining, milling, or transporting. The program was originally created in 1990 but is scheduled to end in 2024. However, the program failed to include New Mexican uranium miners and those who were affected by the nuclear bomb test at the Trinity site.” (Gabe Vasquez, [Press Release](#), 12/8/23)

- **RECA Is A Federal Law That Gives Compensation To People Who Developed Certain Serious Illnesses After Radiation Exposure From The U.S. Nuclear Weapons Program.** “The Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA), 42 U.S.C. § 2210 note, is a federal law that provides partial restitution to individuals who developed certain serious illnesses following exposure to radiation from the U.S. nuclear weapons program, or their survivors. RECA was reauthorized under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, Pub. L. 119-21, enacted on July 4, 2025. This unique statute was designed as a non-adversarial alternative to litigation. RECA does not

require claimants to prove causation. Rather, claimants qualify for compensation by establishing a diagnosis of a compensable disease after working or residing in a designated location for a specific period. RECA assigned responsibility to the Attorney General to establish procedures and make determinations regarding whether claims satisfy the statutory eligibility criteria. Regulations implementing RECA are published at 28 C.F.R. Part 79. These regulations establish procedures designed to use existing records so that claims can be resolved in a reliable, objective, and non-adversarial manner, quickly and with little administrative cost to the United States or to the person filing the claim.” (U.S. Department Of Justice Civil Division, [Radiation Exposure Compensation Act](#), Accessed 4/29/26)

On March 14, 2024, Republican Congresswoman Ann Wagner Released A Statement With A Bipartisan Group Of Members Including Vasquez Urging House And Senate Leadership And Appropriators To Include The Reauthorization Of The Radiation Exposure Compensation Act In The Upcoming Appropriations Package.

“Washington, D.C. – Congresswoman Ann Wagner (R-MO) today led a letter with her colleagues Rep. Jason Smith (R-MO), Rep. Blaine Luetkemeyer (R-MO), Rep. Mark Alford (R-MO), Rep. Dina Titus (D-NV), Rep. Teresa Leger Fernández, Rep. Michael Lawler (R-NY) Rep. Greg Stanton (D-AZ), Rep. Gabe Vasquez (D-NM), Rep. Melanie Stansbury (D-NM), Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ), Rep. James Moylan (R-Guam), Rep. Ruben Gallego (D-AZ), Rep. Brittany Petterson (D-CO), and Rep. Paul Gosar (R-AZ) calling on House and Senate Leadership and Appropriators to include the reauthorization of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) in the upcoming appropriations package. This builds on Congresswoman Wagner’s previous letter from March 11 that highlighted the importance of RECA reauthorization legislation to Missourians. The Members said: ‘We write with the utmost urgency regarding the impending sunset of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA). It is imperative that S. 3853, the Radiation Exposure Compensation Reauthorization Act, legislation that recently passed the Senate on a 69-30 vote, be attached to the upcoming fiscal year (FY) 2024 appropriations package. As you know, the United States conducted scores of above-ground nuclear tests blanketing the American West in nuclear fallout as we perfected our nuclear arsenal. It is due to the sacrifice of the uranium workers and downwinders that the U.S. was able to win World War II and Cold War. However, we as a country have never adequately repaid that debt to all of the deserving victims. ‘There is broad bipartisan and bicameral agreement that the United States must compensate American citizens who have gotten cancer and other diseases as a result of reckless government actions that exposed them to dangerous levels of radiation. We know the government did just that; RECA is the remedy for that harm. Absent Congressional action, RECA will sunset on June 7, 2024. Therefore, we urge you to include S. 3853 in the FY24 appropriations package that will soon come to the House floor.’” (Ann Wagner, [Press Release](#), 3/14/24)

On April 12, 2024, During A U.S. House Armed Services Committee Hearing Titled “FY25 Budget Request For Missile Defense And Missile Defeat Programs”, Vasquez Told Lieutenant General Sean Gainey That We Have A Toxic Legacy Of Impacts To The Local Surrounding Communities From Testing Activities, Which Was Why Vasquez Is Fighting To Reauthorize RECA.

“GABE VASQUEZ: Thank you, chairman. Thank you to the ranking member. Thank you to our witnesses for being here today. This morning, I have the privilege of representing New Mexico's second district, home to White Sands Missile Range. It's the birthplace of America's space and missile program and through -- the White Sands continues to be the Department of Defense's Premier research and testing facility for our nation's most important weapons programs. They also continue to face struggles maintaining modern technology and facilities. Now during my visit to White Sands this January, base leadership shared with me that their long-range radars, which are supposed to provide critical tracking capabilities for weapons testing, have been in service and have not been upgraded since the 1960s, posing significant challenges to keeping them operational and in line with modern missile technology. Beyond these maintenance challenges, I've understood that these radar challenges and the failures during tests have become increasingly frequent, occurring as often as five times per month and with tracking inaccuracies that are off by hundreds to thousands of yards. Not being able to accurately track weapons during testing

not only poses a safety risk to the folks that are working there, but also to surrounding communities, but threatens our readiness and national security. And I think that's completely unacceptable. We should do everything in our power to ensure White Sands has the necessary equipment to safely and accurately track weapons tests so that we're providing our warfighters with the best tools and information possible to accomplish their mission. Lieutenant General Gainey, are diminished testing conditions like these acceptable to you? And how do deficient testing standards pose a threat to our national security? SEAN GAINES: Congressman, thank you for the question. White Sands Missile Range remains an integral part, as you know, to our testing and the Army's air and missile defense program. As the senior mission commander for Kwajalein Atoll, I also have strategic testing at those sites where I also maintain an infrastructure and sensors to be able to get after that. And I believe continuing funding and improvements of all of those capabilities are critical to continue to ensure that we have the best capability as we test our critical systems moving forward. GABE VASQUEZ: Thank you so much. And New Mexico, as you know, Lieutenant General, we have a long legacy of not just missile testing, but a lot of research and development that has contributed to the strength of this nation's national security. We also have a toxic legacy of impacts to the local surrounding communities from testing activities, which is one of the reasons I'm fighting, and others here in congress are fighting to reauthorize RECA. And so, we just want to make sure that those technologies are updated and that we don't make the same mistakes of the past, at the same time protecting national security.” (U.S. House Armed Services Committee, [YouTube](#), 4/12/24) 1:54:50

On April 30, 2024, During A U.S. House Armed Services Committee Hearing Titled “Department Of Defense Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Request”, Vasquez Asked Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin III If He Would Support Additional Expansion Of RECA And Stated That He Was Fighting To Reauthorize And Expand RECA In The NDAA. “GABE VASQUEZ: Thank you, Mr. chairman, and thank you, Secretary Austin, General Brown for taking the time to speak with us this morning. It's good to see you again. I hope you're feeling well, Mr. Secretary. I have the privilege of representing New Mexico's Second Congressional district home to White Sands Missile Range and the Trinity site, the location of the first ever atomic weapons test. Now, Secretary, you may be familiar with what's been happening in Congress over the last year regarding RECA and expanding RECA, in particular the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act. Now in New Mexico, we're unfortunately sometimes known as the nation's nuclear dumping ground and also the nuclear weapons testing site of the Trinity site, the first ever atomic bomb tested in New Mexico by the federal government. Now we haven't had the compensation for the folks who have suffered and their generations of families who have suffered subsequently for that nuclear bomb testing. We're also home to places like the Jackpot Mine right outside of Laguna Pueblo where uranium mining has taken place for years without proper remediation. That is contaminated water sources and that is also impacted those miners. So we desperately need help for the folks that are in New Mexico that have suffered from the impacts of what the federal government caused. So without warning, nearly half a million New Mexicans without -- within a 150 mile radius of the Trinity site were exposed to deadly ionizing radiation and given no information about the dangers of radioactive effects following the test. Let me say that again, Secretary, without warning. Now that several of my Republican colleagues have supported RECA reform, folks like Senator Josh Hawley from Missouri, Representative James Moylan from Guam, I believe it's imperative that we pass RECA reform. Secretary Austin, does the Department of Defense apologize on the record for exposing New Mexicans to deadly radiation during the Trinity test? LLOYD AUSTIN III: Well, let me just say up front that the safety and health and welfare of our troops and our families very important to us as well as a health and welfare of the community members. And so this is something we take very seriously. Um and of course uh, you know, we would want to ensure that everyone that's been disadvantaged is compensated. But I would point out to you that the Department of Justice is the lead agency for -- in terms of overseeing the compensation program, so. GABE VASQUEZ: And, Secretary, do you believe that a harm done by the federal government should be fixed by the federal government? LLOYD AUSTIN III: I do. GABE VASQUEZ: OK. Um, do you think an apology is in order for all those generations of families that have not received proper compensation for exposure to deadly radiation? LLOYD AUSTIN III: If there is

something that uh, uh, you know, community members have suffered because of our actions and certainly we should apologize for that. GABE VASQUEZ: Thank you. So would you support additional expansion of RECA to compensate the victims of radiation? LLOYD AUSTIN III: Well, certainly I'm in favor of making sure that that people who have been disadvantaged are -- are adequately compensated. So I support that. GABE VASQUEZ: Thank you, Secretary. I appreciate it and that's why I'm fighting to reauthorize and expand RECA in this year's NDAA to finally bring justice to these communities like those in New Mexico and beyond who have been suffering for far too long. Thank you both for your dedicated service, General, Secretary to our country and for all you do to support our brave service members in uniform. (U.S. House Armed Services Committee, [YouTube](#), 4/30/24) 3:30:00

On May 16, 2024, Vasquez Posted A Press Release Titled “Advocates Demand House Speaker Mike Johnson ‘Pass RECA Before We Die’”. “Advocates Demand House Speaker Mike Johnson ‘Pass RECA Before We Die’ WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Representative Gabe Vasquez (NM-02) joined a press conference alongside Senator Ben Ray Luján, Representative Teresa Leger Fernández, Representative Melanie Stansbury, a group of bipartisan members in the House, and members of communities across the country with illnesses linked to radiation exposure from the production and testing of nuclear weapons to call on Speaker of the House Mike Johnson to allow a vote on a bill that would improve and reauthorize the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA). As of today, the House has just nine working days remaining to act on the RECA expansion bill passed by the Senate. The program, which provides health screenings and compensation for people sickened by U.S. testing of nuclear weapons, expires June 7. The Senate bill, which Johnson must bring to the floor for a vote, would expand the program to cover people who have been erroneously excluded, increase compensation provided to those harmed, and extend the program for six years. ‘I’m fighting to reauthorize and expand RECA in this year’s NDAA to finally bring justice to the communities like those in New Mexico and beyond, who have been suffering for far too long,’ said Congressman Vasquez. ‘Last year, Speaker Johnson removed RECA from the final NDAA. We are running out of time to deliver justice and much-needed economic aid to our southern New Mexico communities.’” (Gabe Vasquez, [Press Release](#), 5/16/24)

On May 26, 2024, Vasquez Stated That It Is The Federal Governments Responsibility To Fix The Harm Caused By Them During The Trinity Test. “‘This was a harm inflicted by the federal government, and it is the federal government's responsibility to fix it. Bottom line,’ Rep. Gabe Vasquez (D-N.M.), who represents the area where the Trinity Test occurred, said at a press conference urging the House to act.” (Russell Contreras, “House Faces Deadline On Helping Trinity Test Atomic Bomb Victims,” [Axios](#), 5/26/24)

On June 10, 2025, Vasquez Issued A Joint Statement U.S. Senators Ben Ray Luján (D-N.M.), Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.), And Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernández (D-N.M.) Who All Urged The Need To Reauthorize And Strengthen RECA And Vasquez Stated That Many New Mexicans Will Continue To Suffer, That Inaction Denies Justice To Downwinders, Tribal Nations, And Rural Communities, And That New Mexicans Are Sick And Ignored Once Again. “Washington, D.C. – Today, on the one-year anniversary of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) expiring due to Congressional Republican inaction, U.S. Senators Ben Ray Luján (D-N.M.) and Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.), along with U.S. Representatives Teresa Leger Fernández (D-N.M.) and Gabe Vasquez (D-N.M.), issued the following statements highlighting the urgent need to reauthorize and strengthen RECA. The lawmakers underscored the critical importance of delivering long-overdue justice to Americans harmed by nuclear testing and uranium exposure. Despite the Senate passing RECA reauthorization twice with bipartisan support, House Republicans failed to act before the law expired during the 118th Congress. Senator Luján also secured the public support of then-President Joe Biden during a visit to New Mexico. ... ‘The failure to reauthorize the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act leaves many New Mexicans who continue to suffer from the legacy of nuclear testing and uranium mining without the support they urgently need. Speaker Johnson’s inaction denies justice to downwinders, Tribal nations, and rural communities. Our people are still sick — and they’ve been ignored once again,’ said

Vasquez. ‘I’ll keep fighting to reauthorize and expand RECA so these families get the compensation and recognition they deserve.’” (Ben Ray Lujan, [Press Release](#), 6/10/25)