

McInnis, a Republican whose district includes the mining county of western Colorado, plans to introduce a House version of the emergency funding bill.

However, legislative analysts say it's unlikely any new money will be approved before the summer or, more likely, at the end of the fiscal year in October.

The IOUs are worse than an embarrassment or inconvenience, said Ed Brickey, co-chairman of the Western States RECA Reform Coalition, a collection of citizen groups that are advocates for victims covered by the act.

"It has been an injustice to delay any further appropriations or the regulations because the people that have (IOUs) are dying," Brickey said.

The RECA program has long been plagued by complaints about a complex application process that often takes victims many tries and several years to clear.

The program got into its current funding mess during the 11th-hour haggling over the budget in late 2000. Ironically, it came just months after Congress amended the law to ease restrictions, cover more medical conditions, add another \$50,000 in compensation under a separate program, and allow uranium mill workers and ore transporters to qualify for the first time.

The Justice Department estimated it would take \$93 million to cover all the claims expected to be approved in fiscal 2001. But that request came too late, and when the budget was approved in December it included only \$10.8 million for the trust fund. The shortfall includes about \$23 million for those already waiting for their money.

The waiting has left many victims bitter and hopeless in the small towns of southern and western Colorado, eastern Utah and northwest New Mexico, where uranium once meant a livelihood.

These guys went underground. They would work their butts off, sometimes 10 to 16 hours a day . . . so the government could get their damned uranium," said Anna Cox of Montrose, Colo. "And how do they get repaid? They die for it, with a promissory note that maybe you'll get something . . . after you're dead."

Her 63-year-old husband, Eugene, has lung cancer. He worked 10 years in the uranium mines outside Grants in New Mexico and Naturita, Slick Rock and Gateway, Colo.

In the early days, before strict radon monitoring, companies and workers gave little regard to the health risks, he said.

"It was work, guaranteed," Eugene Cox said. "You drilled holes with a jackhammer and you shot, blasted out. Then you loaded, either with a slusher or by hand and a scoop shovel."

Dust filled the air, but workers never wore protective masks. They used gloves only if they brought their own. Some miners remember days when the only "fresh air" they breathed was what leaked out of the air compressors that ran the jackhammers.

"I was a young, healthy man," Eugene Cox said. "I did not know. It was a livelihood for me and my three children and my wife."

It took three years for Eugene Cox to verify his work history and qualify his illness for compensation. Last year, he finally got an approval letter, which explained the lack of funding and told him to wait.

"I stuck it in a box," Anna Cox said. "That's what good it's doing me."

Uranium left its mark on whole communities throughout the Four Corners region.

In tiny Monticello, Utah, local newspaper editor Bill Boyle has a map stuck with more than 200 pins, one for each local resident who died or is dying of a radiation-related illness.

One pin represents a small, one-story house in the center of town.

There, former miner Joe Torres has turned his family's living room into a medical ward, with a bed propped where the sofa should be. Cancer has spread from his lungs to his liver, and a government IOU is doing him little good when he needs to buy more painkilling patches.

"I'm very shaken," he said. "I can't do a bit of work. And Social Security doesn't give me enough money to pay for my medicines. . . . I'd like to get at least part of my money to get by."

Combined, he and his wife, Vicenta, get just over \$1,000 a month from Social Security. The painkillers alone cost \$300 a month, and health insurance is coming due soon, she said.

Torres, 74, started working in the mines of 1951.

"They went in and worked and came back pretty well dusty from head to toe," Vicenta remembers. "But he had no idea that in time it would do something to them."

Shortly after talking with a reporter, Torres was hospitalized.

Since 1990, the radiation compensation program has relied on year-to-year allocations in the federal budget. Several lawmakers say it should be converted into an entitlement program so payments are guaranteed without a year-to-year budget fight. But they disagree on how to accomplish that.

Regardless of the answer, Rep. Mark Udall, D-Colo., says filling the trust fund's coffers should be a national priority.

"These people, as you know, have been jacked around for a lot of years," he said. "The statement we would make by providing them with this compensation they're due would be more than the money."

Meanwhile, surviving victims struggle to pay high medical bills and widows wait, not knowing when the government's promise will be kept.

In the northwest New Mexico town of Aztec, 56-year-old miner's widow Helen Story says she works two jobs a day shift and an overnight shift taking care of elderly hospice patients to get by.

She worked the same jobs while her husband, Jerald, fought the final months against cancer before he died last March at age 59.

Jerald Story started working in the uranium and coal mines as a teen-ager.

He never built up a pension because, like many miners, he bounced from one company to another over several decades. Health problems forced him to retire and go onto Social Security disability in the early 1980s.

"I was having to work as much as I could, which took time away from him," Helen Story said. "Some days you think you just can't take much more."

The couple first applied for RECA compensation three years ago. The government IOU came after Jerald Story's death, and his widow has become bitter.

"If they weren't going to stand good with the program, they never should have started it," Helen Story scoffs. "It's for sure that if we owed the government, they wouldn't wait this long on us."

PEOPLE WHO CARE ABOUT KIDS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, last weekend, I joined members of the Michigan Partnership to Prevent Gun Violence and the Michigan Million Mom March, part of the coalition of People Who Care About Kids to circulate petitions calling for a citizens' referendum on Public Act 381, the "shall issue" law.

Passed by the Michigan Legislature in December 2000 and signed by the

Governor, the Act takes discretion away from local gun boards and requires that authorities "shall" or must issue concealed weapons licenses to any one 21 years or older without a criminal record, with limited exceptions.

People Who Care About Kids is collecting signatures to suspend implementation of the law, which would otherwise go into effect on July 1st of this year. If enough signatures are collected by the deadline, the issue will be put before voters in 2002. Petition organizers need only 151,356 valid signatures by the deadline, March 27th, but are seeking 225,000 signatures in total.

The "shall issue" law is opposed by many law enforcement groups, religious leaders, child advocates and community leaders. They oppose the law because they believe if people are able to carry handguns into restaurants, stores, shopping malls, movie theaters, courtrooms, parks or in cars, our communities will be less safe. I also oppose the "shall issue" law. Last weekend, I signed the petition to put the issue before the voters and I urge others to sign it as well.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY STATEMENT BY THE FRIENDS OF IRELAND

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, today, the Friends of Ireland in Congress released its annual St. Patrick's Day Statement. The Friends of Ireland is a bipartisan group of Senators and Representatives opposed to violence and terrorism in Northern Ireland and dedicated to a United States policy that promotes a just, lasting and peaceful settlement of the conflict.

I believe this year's Friends of Ireland Statement will be of interest to all of our colleagues who are concerned about this issue, and I ask unanimous consent that it may be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

FRIENDS OF IRELAND STATEMENT—ST. PATRICK'S DAY 2001

The Friends of Ireland in the Congress join 44 million Irish Americans in celebrating the unique ties between America and the island of Ireland. We welcome the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, to the United States, and we send warm greetings to the President of Ireland, Mary McAleese.

We commend President Bush for expressing his willingness to remain involved in the pursuit of peace in Northern Ireland. The active engagement of President Clinton played an instrumental role in advancing the peace process, and it is vital that President Bush remain engaged.

The valuable work carried out by the new institutions set up under the Good Friday Agreement demonstrates the capacity of these institutions to contribute significantly to the welfare of the people of Northern Ireland and throughout Ireland. We call on all political representatives to develop the potential of the new arrangements by operating them to the full, under the rules, and in the spirit of the Agreement and thereby to consolidate the institutions for which the

people have voted and which they clearly want to see working for the common benefit. We appeal to all parties to work together to remove the remaining obstacles standing in the way of the full achievement of this goal.

The Good Friday Agreement was endorsed by the people of Ireland and Northern Ireland with majorities from both communities. It provided a mandate to those working on behalf of peace, justice, and the creating of a new beginning in Northern Ireland. Its provisions are interdependent, and to ensure the successful implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, those provisions must be addressed concurrently.

In the past, dangerous political vacuums have been avoided when all parties to the Good Friday Agreement have been willing to make difficult political decisions and implement confidence-building measures. We urge them to do so again.

We believe the Patten recommendations on police reform must be fully implemented. We acknowledge that progress has been made, but further steps must be taken to ensure that the police service will be representative of all people in Northern Ireland and have the support of the community it serves. An inclusive and credible police service, which is supported by nationalists and unionists, is in the interest of everyone in Northern Ireland. Likewise, the criminal justice system must be fair and impartial. It must be responsive to the community's concerns, encourage community involvement wherever possible, and have the confidence of all parts of the community.

We also believe the British Government should scale back its military presence in Northern Ireland, particularly in South Armagh. The dismantlement of watchtowers and military installations in Northern Ireland would represent a significant confidence-building measure that would advance the pursuit of peace.

We welcome the May 5, 2000 statement by the IRA that it "will initiate a process that will completely and verifiably put IRA arms beyond use . . . in such a way as to avoid risk to the public and misappropriation by others and ensure maximum public confidence," and we welcome the IRA's recent decision to reengage with the de Chastelain Commission on decommissioning. The IRA's decision is a welcome first step, and we hope it will pave the way for further action by all parties. We urge the IRA to engage in meaningful dialogue with the Commission and take tangible steps to put weapons beyond use.

We also emphasize the importance of advancing human rights and equality issues under the Good Friday Agreement, including the creation of a Bill of Rights. Similarly, we call for the establishment of independent inquiries into the Finucane, Nelson, and Hamill cases, to demonstrate commitment to human rights and accountability.

We commend the Irish and British Governments for their ongoing efforts to work with the political leaders in Northern Ireland and to advance the peace process in Northern Ireland. On St. Patrick's Day, we urge all the leaders to recognize the danger of delay and redouble efforts to fully implement the Good Friday Agreement.

Friends of Ireland Executive Committee.

House: Dennis J. Hastert, Richard A. Gephardt, James T. Walsh.

Senate: Edward M. Kennedy, Christopher J. Dodd, Susan M. Collins.

HOUSE THE SENATE BUILT

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I will be participating in the Habitat for Humanity "House the Senate Built." We will be breaking ground March 17th at

1:00 p.m. This home will be built for the Portillo family at 1209 Raven Place in Loveland, Colorado. I am especially proud to be working with the Loveland Habitat for Humanity chapter because Loveland is my hometown. In addition, the Loveland chapter has existed for 14 years and, in that time, they have built 41 houses. Forty-one families that may have never been in a position to own a home, are now homeowners thanks to the Loveland chapter of Habitat for Humanity.

This is not my first involvement with Habitat for Humanity. During the Republican Convention last year my wife Joan and I had the opportunity to work on a project with the Philadelphia chapter of Habitat. I have also participated in builds with Colorado affiliates in Fort Morgan and in Loveland. This September Habitat International will be celebrating their Silver Anniversary. Since its inception, Habitat has built a total of 100,000 houses.

When I reflect on my vision of housing assistance, an old saying comes to mind: "If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. If you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime." I am especially supportive of Habitat for Humanity because the way that they operate as an organization, fits this old saying perfectly. While Habitat homes are purchased by the individual homeowner families, corporations, faith groups and others all provide financial support and assistance in building the home, and the work is organized at the local level. Instead of relying solely on perennial handouts from the government, Habitat seeks out both private and community resources to form a partnership that results in homes for people who, otherwise, may not have them. This approach works because people at the local level are best equipped to know who needs assistance and are most familiar with the way that local systems operate. Homeowner families are chosen by the local Habitat affiliate according to their need; their ability to repay the no-profit, no-interest mortgage; and their willingness to work in partnership with Habitat. Each family is responsible for paying back their loan and participating in the building of their own home. All of this indicates that Habitat is far more interested in helping people to create a new life for themselves than they are in simply putting a roof over their heads. Put quite simply, Habitat is a very effective way to promote the American dream of home ownership.

On this same note, I would also like to talk for a moment about two people that I hold in high esteem. The first person I would like to recognize is someone whom I can say, with very little bias, is one of the most wonderful women in the world: my wife Joan. She is someone who often seems tireless in her willingness to pitch in. This willingness was exemplified again at the House the Senate Built. Now, as I said before, Joan has worked on several of the Habitat projects with me, and this

project was no exception. Just before the Senate members departed the building site to return to the Capitol, many of us passed our hammers on to our spouses so that they could continue building into the afternoon. I was proud to be able to hand my hammer over to Joan. She came home exhausted, but pleased with the progress that was made on the home, which I understand was considerable. In fact, I am told that when a crew member was walking back to the building site with several of the ladies Joan warned him that "now that the men are gone it's time for the real work to begin." She then put in several hours in her hardhat pounding nails, stuffing insulation and lending a hand wherever it was needed.

The second is Colorado's first lady Frances Owens. She has made Habitat for Humanity projects a top priority since her husband was elected several years ago. She has participated in three builds within the last few years and will now be host to a program called Women Building a Legacy. This program will take place May 5-11 in Montbello, a suburb of Denver. Women Building a Legacy will be a blitz build that will result in five houses in seven days. These homes will be a much needed addition to the Montbello neighborhood where they are to be built and I commend Mrs. Owens for her efforts.

Again, I say thank you to Habitat for Humanity for the services that they provide to so many communities throughout America and the world, thank you to Frances Owens for the work that she does on behalf of Habitat and thank you to my wife Joan for always being willing to do what needs to be done for no bigger reason than because it needs to be done.

FOIA TURNS 35

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, James Madison said that if men were angels, no government would be necessary. But because people and governments are fallible, he added, "experience has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions." The Freedom Of Information Act (FOIA), a modern improvement in American government, has proved itself as a vital precaution that has served the people well in defending their right to know what their government is doing—or not doing. Friday is the 250th birthday of James Madison and, appropriately, this is also the day that we commemorate FOIA's 35th anniversary.

I am not sure that we could pass FOIA if it were offered in Congress today, but thank heaven it is firmly etched by now in our national culture. Just this month a unanimous U.S. Supreme Court affirmed FOIA's mandate of broad disclosure, noting that full agency disclosure would "help ensure an informed citizenry, vital to the functioning of a democratic society."

FOIA may be an imperfect tool, but as one foreign journalist observed, "in