

Testimony of David A Anderson on HB 4071

Chairman Greenlick and Health Care Committee Members:

My name is David A Anderson, I reside at 6203 SE 92nd Ave., Portland, Oregon. I was a Co-op Advisor with the Peace Corps at Ujelang Atoll, Marshall Islands from 1975-1977. I urge passage of House Bill 4071, the COFA Premium Assistance Program bill.

The people on Ujelang were forcibly moved from their ancestral home of Enewetak after the end of WWII when the United States decided to use Enewetak and Bikini Atolls as test sites for nuclear and thermonuclear devices. The removal followed being caught in the cross hairs of fierce fighting between the Japanese and American super powers in February 1944. Ultimately the people from Enewetak were dropped off on Ujelang Atoll, a much smaller and resource poorer atoll than Enewetak. Starvation was at times common because of infrequent ship service and lack of local resources.

The nuclear testing by the U.S. Government has rendered some atolls, and portions of others uninhabitable to this day. While I was in the Marshalls people were living on both Bikini and Rongelap Atolls and there were also Peace Corps Volunteers living on both atolls. Medical testing was done on the people on Bikini and they were found to have elevated levels of radiation (cesium?) in their systems. The Peace Corps Volunteer was removed, but the Marshallese were left. I overheard one American to say, 'either the clean-up of Bikini was not up to standards, or the standards weren't high enough.' It is my understanding that people still are not able to live on, or utilize resources on, Bikini, Rongelap, Rongerik, and Alinginae Atolls, or on northern Enewetak Atoll, because of residual radiation poisoning. I know people who have died from cancer induced by radiation poisoning, suffered from amputations and are on dialysis because of rampant diabetes.

The Marshallese are an industrious group of people who would much rather be living on their ancestral homeland than somewhere else. However, because of forces beyond their making it is impossible for them to change their lot. New forces are now threatening their ability to stay in their homeland at all. Global glacial melt cause by climate warming is causing sea levels to raise. Average elevation on these beautiful coral atolls and islands is under ten feet, so even modest raise in sea level will have a negative impact on living space in a nation with only 70 square miles of land.

Thank you for your consideration. I urge passage of House Bill 4071.

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