

The Widespread Harm of Nuclear Testing

TO THE EDITOR:

Re "Nuclear Testing Victims Deserve More," by W.J. Hennigan (Opinion, May 26):

The federal government's nuclear weapons testing program was an assault on its own citizens — an assault that didn't stop with the end of the Cold War.

Radioactive fallout moved across the country and entered bodies through breathing, food and water. Official denials of any harm followed, while Americans suffered and died from cancers caused by fallout.

The 1990 Radiation Exposure Compensation Act to compensate "downwinders" with cancer was a first step, but originally was limited only to those who lived in 20 counties in Utah, Nevada and Arizona. Current efforts to expand compensation are struggling to overcome congressional resistance; without action, the law is set to expire on June 7.

Government failure to act continues even as evidence of harm grows. Studies of radioactive Strontium-90 found in milk and in 320,000 baby teeth proved fallout was building up in bodies. Early results of an ongoing health study show Strontium-90 levels in baby teeth of Americans who died of cancer were more than double that of healthy Americans.

The injustice to those victimized by bomb tests is staggering. The federal government has harmed — rather than protected — its people and has failed to take responsibility. It is crucial that leaders finally recognize the true

impact of bomb testing, and expand the law; to not act and let it expire would be unthinkable.

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The writer, the model, is the vice president of the Radiation and Public Health Project.

TO THE EDITOR:

We must finally close the door on nuclear testing forever.

The United States Senate should approve the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, which bans all nuclear test explosions. The Senate's failure to approve the treaty has stalled progress in nuclear arms control and disarmament.

We need to be taking steps to calm international tensions and prevent a costly nuclear arms race with Russia and China. Ratifying the test ban treaty would be an olive branch of peace to other nuclear powers and encourage disarmament negotiations.

The alternative is to drift along with a dangerous and expensive nuclear arms buildup. The resumption of nuclear test explosions will linger over us without diplomatic action.

Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy were both right to pursue a treaty ending all nuclear testing. We have to finish the job today and take a big step to make the world safe from nuclear weapons.

WILLIAM LAMBERS, CINCINNATI

The writer is the author of "The Road to Peace: From the Disarming of the Great Lakes to the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty."