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Oak Ridge, TN.

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COMMENTS FOR THE RECORD: REGARDING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ENERGY EMPLOYEES COMPENSATION ACT; MEETING IN CINCINNATI 25 OCT 2001

1. We reiterate the point we have made continually - that information regarding all aspects of this program should be widely disseminated in Oak Ridge, and that meetings should be held in Oak Ridge. Perhaps the second largest population of affected individuals would be Hanford, but certainly Oak Ridge has not been adequately informed nor included. Information needs to be in the Oak Ridge Public Library and the Knox and Anderson and Roane County Public Libraries, at the very least. We reiterate our objection to putting information in a DOE Reading Room in the area of Washington, D.C., which is defeating the intended purpose of getting information to the public.

Processes such as these continue to give the appearance of openness to the public, when in fact, the same vested interests in defeating or creating administrative obstacles to the legitimate claims of employees are still at work with "business as usual". This lack of candor has been endemic for 60 years and is part of what has created the existing problems in the first place.

2. The intent of Congress is certainly to expedite the legitimate claims being paid. This has not changed in the past year. The need for an act of Congress was partly because existing State Workmen's Compensation programs are not geared to handle this type of claim from chronic exposures. Workmen's Compensation should not now become a further obstacle which will result in many deserving individuals dying before they can ever get a claim approved.

3. The Act as passed was intended by Congress to be a first step. Nobody expected it to go into effect as is. All the language and the press releases indicated the anticipation that further ironing out of details would result in a fairer program than this existing "first step." Unfortunately, our country has experienced two major events which nobody could have predicted - a contested Presidential election and a terrorist attack leading to the present war. We still owe it to the individuals who deserve compensation to PAY THEM, not deter them.

Many individuals whose voices need to be heard would have spoken if meetings were held in Oak Ridge.