COLD WAR HEROES PETITION CONGRESS TO REFORM SICK WORKER COMPENSATION PROGRAM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 13, 2010

CONTACT: Arin Billings, 205-913-2613
Antoinette Bonsignore, 425-835-2850: Linde.Ceramics.SEC.Action.Group@gmail.com
Jan Lovelace, 865-986-9360

WASHINGTON - The Alliance of Nuclear Worker Advocacy Groups (ANWAG) will submit petitions to Congress signed by hundreds of Cold War nuclear workers and their families on September 14, 2010, seeking reform of the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA). The two petitions call for the passage of the Charlie Wolf Act and for Congress to initiate oversight hearings to investigate the failed implementation of EEOICPA. Among the many issues workers want Congress to address is the creation of an advisory board to review the Department of Labor’s (DOL) administration of EEOICPA. The Government Accountability Office recommended that DOL increase transparency with the creation of this advisory board in its March 2010 report to Congress.

“Nationwide support for the Charlie Wolf Act is mounting. Every day, nuclear weapons workers, their families, and concerned Americans are signing the Charlie Wolf Act Petition. Congress must act now! So far, the Petition represents citizens from 30 states and we will continue to collect signatures until we have reached constituents in each and every state. We have a powerful voice and we will not give up. Sickened nuclear weapons workers and their survivors need swift passage of the CHARLIE WOLF ACT OF 2009,” stated Arin Billings, creator of the Charlie Wolf Act Petition.

"The need for a DOL advisory board is long overdue. Under EEOICPA many compensation decisions are approved or denied based on Site Exposure Matrix database. While the database is useful in some cases, due to the lack of complete information many claimants are being unjustly denied compensation. For instance, it took me over a year of submitting documents for DOL to add ‘Fire Department’ to the Oak Ridge National Laboratory job description category,” stated Jan Lovelace, ANWAG representative and survivor claimant.

“Congress needs to investigate whether the current NIOSH policy of favoring the individual dose reconstruction program over the far less burdensome Special Exposure Cohort (SEC) program is fiscally responsible. Congress must figure out if the high administrative costs associated with the dose reconstruction program should be abandoned in favor of the far less complex SEC program championed within the Charlie Wolf Act that would eliminate such costly expenses,” stated Antoinette Bonsignore, Linde Ceramics SEC Action Group and ANWAG representative.

EEOICPA was enacted by Congress in 2000 to compensate sickened workers for their sacrifices to our nation. After nearly ten years it is far past time for Congress to figure out why this program has failed to deliver basic fairness and justice for so many thousands of these sickened workers. ANWAG calls upon Congress to do the right thing and honor these Cold War heroes with the swift passage of the Charlie Wolf Act and the creation of the DOL oversight board.

###