

## **SUMMARY**

The Office of the Auditor General has conducted a special review of the Navajo Nation contracts for amending the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) of 1990. The audit focuses on the Nation's performance in administering and managing the contracts which were executed to assist the Navajo Nation in lobbying for RECA amendments from July 1997 to February 2000. The amendments sought by the Nation would ensure adequate compensation for Navajo people affected by radiation as a result of uranium mining on the Navajo reservation.

### **Finding I:           The Navajo Nation was Reasonably Successful In Using Consultants to Lobby for RECA Amendments.**

The Navajo Nation was clear about its objectives for amending RECA. The Navajo Nation Council identified ten key amendments to RECA that would benefit Navajo uranium workers who have been exposed to radiation hazards. To achieve these objectives, the Nation hired consultants under contract. Attorneys were hired to lobby the U.S. Congress and to provide professional expertise in the area of radiation and its related hazards. A consultant was hired to serve as a liaison between the Nation and the attorneys as well as other organizations involved with the amendment efforts. We conclude that the work performed by the attorneys and the consultant was logically related to each contract's scope of work and the Nation's overall RECA objectives. Although the Nation was unable to achieve all ten key concerns, it used the attorneys and consultant hired under contract to secure a majority of these key concerns for inclusion in the 2000 RECA amendments.

### **Finding II:           Contract Management was Weak in Some Areas.**

Although the Nation was reasonably successful in using the consultants, contract management was weakened by administrative errors, limited consultant documentation and poor monitoring. Our review revealed that a payment of \$29,941 for attorney fees and expenses was made in error using funds intended for the consultant. This reduced the total funding available for the consultant contract. Although the error was discovered relatively early in fiscal year 1999, no corrective action was taken to either modify the contract terms or recover the funds. In the end, the consultant was paid approximately \$24,000 less than the amount appropriated by the Navajo Nation Council. Another weakness with contract management was the variation of supporting documentation for the two contracts. The attorneys provided detailed and consistent reports to the Nation but the consultant documentation was limited and sporadic. Limited documentation hindered our ability to appropriately verify the consultant activities and provide a sound basis for paying additional compensation to the consultant. Overall, ineffective program monitoring over contract activities contributed to the financial error and poor documentation for the consultant contract.