



HCR 8 -ENACT MINERS PROTECTION ACT

Rep. Jack Cera - Sponsor Testimony

House Committee on Federalism and Interstate Relations – RM 115

Chairman Roegner, Vice Chairman Lipps, and Ranking Member Leland and Members of the House Committee on Federalism and Interstate Relations, I stand before you today to speak on the importance of HCR 8, a resolution that encourages Congress to enact the Miners Protection Act of 2017. Plain and simply put: We need a long-term solution to maintain the promise made to coal miners decades ago that the federal government would support their pensions and health care. The Miners Protection Act is bi-partisan legislation, and US Senators – Sherrod Brown and Rob Portman are part of the driving force behind this measure in Washington DC.

I want to acknowledge the fact that just a few days ago, Congress approved a long-term solution for healthcare for coal miners. This came after several temporary fixes and was a great step forward to fulfill part of the historical promise made to coal miners over sixty years ago. With that said, we still need to act to protect the retirement benefits that our miners have rightfully earned.

Coal miners have worked diligently underground to power our country for many years. Let me take a moment to thank them for the sacrifices they make every day going underground to do a very dangerous job. They are not asking for a hand out – they have earned every dime. Passing this resolution shows that the Ohio Legislature supports these men and women. Not just at election time when it's politically convenient, but when they need our help the most after their bodies are broken and they struggle to breath from Black Lung disease.

Back in 1946, President Harry Truman saw the need for creating a welfare and retirement fund that guaranteed benefits to miners and their dependents for retirement, sickness, permanent disability and death. At that time, an agreement was struck between the US Government, the United Mine Workers of America and the coal operators for the good of the country. This Executive Order, known as the Krug-Lewis agreement, was put into place to provide these dedicated men and women with a guaranteed pension and health care plan for their hard work and service to the Nation.

The Miners Pension Protection Act of 2017 will amend the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977, the federal law that regulates the environmental effects of coal mining in the US. It will allow the transfer of funds in excess of the amount needed to meet existing obligations under the Abandoned Mine Land Fund to the 1974 Pension Plan to prevent its insolvency.

Again, this legislation has bipartisan support from both Ohio's U.S. Senators and several of our Congressional delegation as well as Republicans and Democrats from other coal producing states. It is important that the Ohio Legislature back those bipartisan efforts and show our support for the Miners Protection Act of 2017.

I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

(Times Leader Article Attached)