

The Times Leader

Portman, Brown introduce bill to protect coal miners' retirement

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Sens. Rob Portman and Sherrod Brown on Thursday introduced the Miners Pension Protection Act, legislation to secure the nation's retired miners' pensions by shoring up the 1974 Pension Plan, which is headed for insolvency due to coal company bankruptcies and the 2008 financial crisis.

The Miners Pension Protection Act is fully paid for and will not cost taxpayers money.

"We must protect the hard-earned pensions of our nation's coal miners," said Portman, R-Ohio. *"While we made some progress by securing a permanent health care fix, we must continue to fight for their pensions — income they worked hard to secure that is at risk due to no fault of their own. I will keep fighting for our coal miners until this bipartisan legislation is signed into law."*

"Ohio miners worked their lives underground to power our country and were promised that when they retired from this backbreaking work they could do so with dignity," said Brown, D-Ohio. *"They aren't asking for a handout — they are asking for what they earned for decades of hard work. We should honor that promise to our miners and their families so they can access the full pensions they've earned."*

On May 4, the Senate passed a portion of Portman and Brown's original Miners Protection Act of 2016, securing a permanent health care fix for retired miners who were affected by recent coal bankruptcies. The passage of this legislation ensured that 22,600 miners did not lose the health care benefits they had earned over a lifetime of hard work. The passage of that bill honored the promise of

lifetime health care made by the U.S. government and coal operators more than 70 years ago. The Miners Protection Act of 2016 passed the Senate Finance Committee on a bipartisan vote of 18 to 8.

Other cosponsors included Sens. Al Franken, D-Minn., Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., Bill Nelson, D-Fla., Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., Patty Murray, D-Wash, Tim Kaine, D-Va., Joe Donnelly, D-Ind., Heidi Heitkamp, D-N.D., Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I., Dick Durbin, D-Ill., Martin Heinrich, D-N.M., Richard Burr, R-N.C., Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., Cory Booker, D-N.J., and Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill.

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