

Committees:

Finance and Appropriations, Ranking Member
Agriculture and Rural Development
Ways and Means

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Sponsor Testimony on HB 15 WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

Thank you, Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Scherer, and Ranking Member Rogers for allowing me to testify today on HB 15.

To my colleagues on the House Ways and Means Committee.... I stand before you today to give you a summary of a proposal that will support abandoned mine reclamation, promote mine safety, and encourage the employment of laid-off mine workers.

For years in Ohio, coal has been the main source of electricity. For a variety of reasons, including regulatory issues and competition from other energy sources, the amount of coal being mined both in Ohio and nationally is on the decline. Severance Tax Revenue from coal mining at both the federal and state level has been the main source for funding reclamation work on pre-law mining sites. While the amount of funding is on the decline, a sizeable number of sites in Ohio still need to be reclaimed.

Under HB 15, three percent of funds from the Kilowatt Hour Tax Receipts Fund will be allocated to abandoned mine reclamation and acid mine drainage (AMD) abatement and treatment. The legislation also calls for earmarking an additional .75 percent of the Kilowatt Hour Tax to the Mine Safety Fund to help with safety training for existing coal miners and for the operation of the Mine Training Center. The kilowatt hour tax generates about \$450 million per year which goes to the GRF. This bill then would add about \$13.5 million to the reclamation work and about \$3.3 million for mine safety. The \$13.5 million would just about double what is available for the federal government for reclamation and allow a funding source to be in place in case that money dries up.

In addition to the many acres---especially in eastern Ohio --- that need to be reclaimed, we also have many streams with AMD problems. By restoring these sites, we can help improve land and water resources adversely affected by pre-law coal mining practices, especially in eastern Ohio.

HB 15 also requires the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to develop a bidding process that encourages the hiring of dislocated coal miners by companies contracted to complete mine reclamation work.

This proposal is a win-win when it comes to addressing some of the critical economic and environmental problems faced by communities in the coal-producing area of the state. This bill will help address funding problems for reclamation work, while also helping put displaced miners back to work.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this proposal. I will be happy to address any questions that you may have and urge your support.