

1 SR54
2 183822-1
3 By Senator Reed
4 RFD:
5 First Read: 09-MAR-17

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8 URGING THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO PASS THE MINERS
9 PROTECTION ACT.

10
11 WHEREAS, in 1946, faced with the prospect of a long
12 strike that could hamper post-war economic recovery, President
13 Harry Truman issued an Executive Order directing the Secretary
14 of the Interior to take possession of all bituminous coal
15 mines in the United States and to negotiate with the United
16 Mine Workers of America appropriate changes in the terms and
17 conditions of employment; and

18 WHEREAS, after a week of negotiations, the historic
19 Krug-Lewis agreement was announced and signed in the White
20 House with Truman as a witness; and

21 WHEREAS, the agreement created a welfare and
22 retirement fund that guaranteed lifetime payments to miners
23 and their dependents and survivors in cases of sickness,
24 permanent disability, death, or retirement; and

25 WHEREAS, the agreement also created a separate
26 medical and hospital fund; and

1 WHEREAS, in 1947, the government returned control of
2 mines back to their owners and a new collective bargaining
3 agreement was reached with the companies that guaranteed
4 retirement benefits to miners and their dependents and
5 survivors for life; and

6 WHEREAS, for the next 70 years miners bargained for
7 money to be dedicated to their health care in retirement,
8 because they knew when they retired they would suffer from
9 illnesses more than the average senior citizen, with more
10 nagging injuries and a greater risk of Black Lung or other
11 cardio-pulmonary disease; and

12 WHEREAS, the federal government has repeatedly
13 confirmed its role in guaranteeing retirement benefits for
14 coal miners; and

15 WHEREAS, in 1992 Congress passed and President
16 George H. W. Bush signed into law the Coal Act, which
17 established an industry-funded mechanism for paying for the
18 health care of retirees whose companies had gone out of
19 business; and

20 WHEREAS, in 2006, Congress and President George W.
21 Bush amended the Coal Act to expand the financial resources
22 available to the Fund; and

23 WHEREAS, a depression reigns in America's coalfields
24 today, with tens of thousands of jobs eliminated; and

25 WHEREAS, multiple companies have filed for
26 bankruptcy, and received approval from bankruptcy courts to
27 shed their retiree obligations, leaving more than 26,000

1 retirees confronting the loss of their health care benefits;
2 and

3 WHEREAS, like many other multi-employer pension
4 funds, the UMWA 1974 Pension Fund lost a significant portion
5 of its value in the 2008-2009 recession and due to the
6 devastation of the coal industry will not receive enough
7 contributions from the employers to make up the shortfall,
8 leading the Fund to likely become insolvent by 2022; and

9 WHEREAS, on December 9, 2016, Congress passed a
10 Continuing Resolution to continue funding for federal programs
11 and services until April 28, 2017, including a provision
12 providing \$45 million for continued health care benefits for
13 these retirees and their families until April 30, 2017; and

14 WHEREAS, Senators Joe Manchin and Shelley Moore
15 Capito have introduced legislation, S. 175, the Miners
16 Protection Act, a bipartisan effort, that would amend the Coal
17 Act to allow retirees from recently bankrupt companies to
18 obtain health care coverage from the UMWA Health and
19 Retirement Funds and would repurpose the balance of an
20 existing appropriation to provide funding to shore up the
21 Pension Plan; and

22 WHEREAS, Representative David McKinley has
23 introduced the Miners Protection Act, H.R. 179, which also has
24 bipartisan support; and

25 WHEREAS, America's coal miners have sacrificed much
26 for our nation, with more than 105,000 killed on the job in

1 the last century and more than 100,000 having died from coal
2 workers' pneumoconiosis, or Black Lung; and

3 WHEREAS, knowing those risks, miners have continued
4 to go to work every day to provide for their families, build a
5 secure future for themselves and produce the fuel that has
6 allowed America to become the most powerful nation on earth;
7 now therefore,

8 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE LEGISLATURE OF
9 ALABAMA, That America has an obligation to our retired coal
10 miners for the sacrifices they have made for our nation.

11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Alabama House of
12 Representatives urges the United States Congress to pass the
13 Miners Protection Act as soon as possible and provide the full
14 measure of benefits these retirees were promised and have
15 earned.

16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this
17 resolution shall be provided to Alabama's Congressional
18 Delegation, so that they may know of our deep concerns
19 regarding this matter.