

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 21, 2016

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Democratic Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator McConnell, Senator Reid, Speaker Ryan and Representative Pelosi:

During the month of October, approximately 12,500 of our nation's retired coal miners received notices¹ informing them that their healthcare benefits will be terminated at the end of this year. The funding provided for Patriot Retirees Voluntary Employee's Beneficiary Association (Patriot VEBA) will be exhausted by December 31, 2016, leaving these miners and their families without the essential healthcare benefits they earned through a lifetime of hard work. On November 1st, another 3,600 miners began to receive notices. And next year, 6,500 more will suffer the same fate. Additionally, the pension fund that these miners and their widows rely on for life's basic necessities will reach the point of no return shortly thereafter. Therefore, we ask that you pass the Miners Protection Act of 2016 (S. 3470) by the end of this year.

In March of this year, the Miners Protection Act was the subject of a legislative hearing before the Senate Committee on Finance. On September 21st, S. 3470 was approved by the Committee with a strong bipartisan vote of 18 to 8. We worked closely with our colleagues to ensure that the bill was fully offset and that no funding was diverted away from either abandoned mine reclamation efforts or annual payments to certified states.

This bill is simple – it is the continuation of a longstanding commitment by our government to lifetime health and retirement benefits for our miners. The Krug-Lewis Agreement was signed in 1946 at the White House in front of President Truman by UMWA president John L. Lewis and Secretary of the Interior Julius Krug. This agreement ended a government seizure of the nation's coal industry after a widespread strike by coal miners.


While the agreement itself was not drafted in perpetuity, Congress essentially codified the promises made in that agreement by subsequently passing the Coal Act. The Coal Act and its 2006 amendments re-committed the government to the health and retirement security of our nation's miners and their families. In fact, prior to passage of the 1992 Coal Act, the Dole

¹ See sample notice dated October 5, 2016 from Patriot Retirees Voluntary Employees' Beneficiary Association.

Commission (appointed by President George H.W. Bush) issued a report stating that, "The UMWA Health and Retirement Funds is as much a creature of government as it is of collective bargaining. There is a line running from the original Boone Report to the present system. In a way, the original Krug-Lewis agreement predisposed, if not predetermined, the system that evolved."²

The Miners Protection Act is a responsible, bipartisan solution to an immediate problem that is fully offset and has gone through regular order. We strongly encourage you to pass the Miners Protection Act of 2016 (S. 3470) by the end of this year.

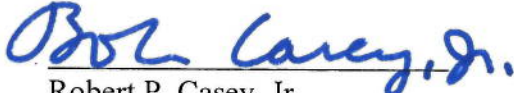
Sincerely,




Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



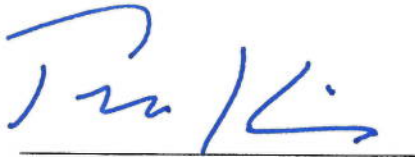
Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senator




Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator




Sherrod Brown
United States Senator




Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator

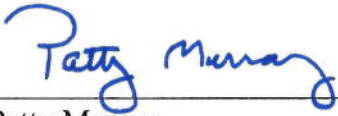


Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Al Franken
United States Senator

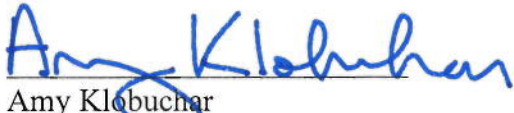
² Coal Commission Report: A Report to the Secretary of Labor and the American People, the Secretary of Labor's Advisory Commission on United Mine Workers of America Retiree Health Benefits as appointed by Secretary of Labor Elizabeth Dole, 1990.



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Joe Donnelly
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



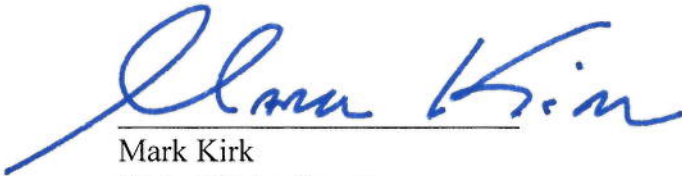
Bill Nelson
United States Senator



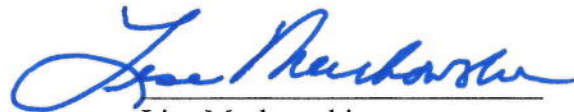
Richard Burr
United States Senator



Rob Portman
United States Senator



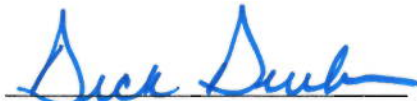
Mark Kirk
United States Senator



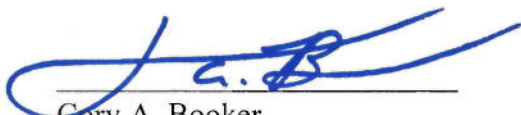
Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



James E. Risch
United States Senator



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



Jerry Moran
United States Senator