

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 9, 2016

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President-Elect of the United States
Trump Tower
725 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Dear Mr. President-Elect:

Preserving retirement benefits for our nation's coal miners is among the most important and pressing items on the congressional agenda. I write to request your help and support for enacting the *Miners Protection Act* early in the 115th Congress.

The *Miners Protection Act* is legislation that I helped to introduce during the current Congress to protect the hard earned health care benefits of 22,000 retired coal miners and their dependents, as well as the pension benefits of 120,000 current and future coal mine retirees.

As you no doubt saw during your visit to West Virginia earlier this year, coal miners are hardworking men and women at the core of our state's communities. Coal mine retirees spent decades producing the energy that has powered America's economy. They did so with the promise that health care coverage and a modest pension would await them in retirement.

The past eight years have been incredibly difficult for coal communities. According to the Mine Safety and Health Administration, there were more than 60,000 fewer coal jobs nationwide in 2016 than there were five years ago.

In addition to these lost jobs, coal industry bankruptcies have jeopardized retiree health care benefits and drastically reduced contributions to the Mineworkers' pension plan.

The *Miners Protection Act* is bipartisan legislation that would use existing funding sources including interest on the Abandoned Mine Land trust fund and a permanent direct appropriation authorized in 2006 to continue retiree health care and protect the solvency of the pension fund for miners. This legislation was approved by the Senate Finance Committee in September with support from both sides of the aisle.

Language in the recently passed continuing resolution extends health coverage for retired miners who were scheduled to lose their coverage on December 31, 2016 until April 30, 2017. While this provision prevents miners from losing their health care coverage in the coming weeks, it is critical that Congress and the new administration take quick action to protect these benefits for the long term.

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Your recent election has provided hope in West Virginia communities that the regulatory assault on the coal and energy industries that has contributed to this economic devastation will soon come to an end. I look forward to working with you on policies that will help put our miners back to work and rebuild local economies that rely on energy production.

It is just as important that we act to preserve health care and pension benefits for retirees who have suffered from the down turn in the coal industry. I ask that you work with me and a bipartisan group of my congressional colleagues to enact the *Miners Protection Act* early in the 115th Congress.

Sincerely,



Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senator