

International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association, Motorcycle Industry Council, National Forest Recreation Association, National Marine Manufacturers Association, National Ski Area Association, New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division.

Outdoor Industry Association, PeopleForBikes, Professional TrailBuilders Association, Rails to Trails Conservancy, Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association, REI Co-op, Rivian, RV Dealers Association, RV Industry Association, Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals, Specialty Equipment Market Association, Specialty Vehicle Institute of America, Sports & Fitness Industry Association, The Corps Network, Trust for Public Land, VF Corporation.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, in particular, I would recognize Jess Turner from the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable, Matt Wade from the American Mountain Guides Association, and Aaron Bannon from America Outdoors for their tireless efforts on this bill.

I would also recognize Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chairman MANCHIN and Ranking Member BARASSO, who are leading the Senate companion legislation to the EXPLORE Act.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support for this first-of-its-kind legislation that will unleash the full potential of the outdoor recreation economy and encourage millions of Americans in Arkansas and across our great country to get out and explore the unparalleled recreational opportunities our Federal lands and waters have to offer.

Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of the bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6492, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1700

COMMUNITY RECLAMATION PARTNERSHIPS ACT

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6233) to amend the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 to authorize partnerships between States and nongovernmental entities for the purpose of reclaiming and restoring land and water resources adversely affected by coal mining activities before August 3, 1977, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6233

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Community Reclamation Partnerships Act”.

SEC. 2. REFERENCE.

Except as otherwise specifically provided, whenever in this Act an amendment is expressed in terms of an amendment to a provision, the reference shall be considered to be made to a provision of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (30 U.S.C. 1201 et seq.).

SEC. 3. STATE MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING FOR CERTAIN REMEDIATION.

Section 405 (30 U.S.C. 1235) is amended by inserting after subsection (l) the following:

“(m) STATE MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING FOR REMEDIATION OF MINE DRAINAGE.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—A State with a State program approved under subsection (d) may enter into a memorandum of understanding with relevant Federal or State agencies (or both) to remediate mine drainage on abandoned mine land and water impacted by abandoned mines within the State. The memorandum may be updated as necessary and resubmitted for approval under this subsection.

“(2) MEMORANDA REQUIREMENTS.—Such memorandum shall establish a strategy satisfactory to the State and Federal agencies that are parties to the memorandum, to address water pollution resulting from mine drainage at sites eligible for reclamation and mine drainage abatement expenditures under section 404, including specific procedures for—

“(A) ensuring that activities carried out to address mine drainage will result in improved water quality;

“(B) monitoring, sampling, and the reporting of collected information as necessary to achieve the condition required under subparagraph (A);

“(C) operation and maintenance of treatment systems as necessary to achieve the condition required under subparagraph (A); and

“(D) other purposes, as considered necessary by the State or Federal agencies, to achieve the condition required under subparagraph (A).

“(3) PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Before submitting a memorandum to the Secretary and the Administrator for approval, a State shall—

“(i) invite interested members of the public to comment on the memorandum; and

“(ii) hold at least one public meeting concerning the memorandum in a location or locations reasonably accessible to persons who may be affected by implementation of the memorandum.

“(B) NOTICE OF MEETING.—The State shall publish notice of each meeting not less than 15 days before the date of the meeting, in local newspapers of general circulation, on the Internet, and by any other means considered necessary or desirable by the Secretary and the Administrator.

“(C) RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENT.—The memorandum shall include responses to substantive concerns raised by the public in comments and during public meetings if received within 30 days of such meetings and opportunity to comment.

“(4) SUBMISSION AND APPROVAL.—The State shall submit the memorandum to the Secretary and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency for approval. The Secretary and the Administrator shall approve or disapprove the memorandum within 120 days after the date of its submission if the Secretary and Administrator find that the memorandum will facilitate additional activities under the State Reclamation Plan under subsection (e) that improve water quality.

“(5) TREATMENT AS PART OF STATE PLAN.—A memorandum of a State that is approved by the Secretary and the Administrator

under this subsection shall be considered part of the approved abandoned mine reclamation plan of the State.

“(n) COMMUNITY RECLAIMER PARTNERSHIPS.—

“(1) PROJECT APPROVAL.—Within 120 days after receiving such a submission, the Secretary shall approve a Community Reclaimer project to remediate abandoned mine lands if the Secretary finds that—

“(A) the proposed project will be conducted by a Community Reclaimer as defined in this subsection or approved subcontractors of the Community Reclaimer;

“(B) for any proposed project that remediates mine drainage, the proposed project is consistent with an approved State memorandum of understanding under subsection (m);

“(C) the proposed project will be conducted on a site or sites inventoried under section 403(c);

“(D) the proposed project meets all submission criteria under paragraph (2);

“(E) the relevant State has entered into an agreement with the Community Reclaimer under which the State shall assume all responsibility with respect to the project for any costs or damages resulting from any action or inaction on the part of the Community Reclaimer in carrying out the project, except for costs or damages resulting from gross negligence or intentional misconduct by the Community Reclaimer, on behalf of—

“(i) the Community Reclaimer; and

“(ii) the owner of the proposed project site, if such Community Reclaimer or owner, respectively, did not participate in any way in the creation of site conditions at the proposed project site or activities that caused any lands or waters to become eligible for reclamation or drainage abatement expenditures under section 404;

“(F) the State has the necessary legal authority to conduct the project and will obtain all legally required authorizations, permits, licenses, and other approvals to ensure completion of the project;

“(G) the State has sufficient financial resources to ensure completion of the project, including any necessary operation and maintenance costs (including costs associated with emergency actions covered by a contingency plan under paragraph (2)(K)); and

“(H) the proposed project is not in a category of projects that would require a permit under title V.

“(2) PROJECT SUBMISSION.—The State shall submit a request for approval to the Secretary that shall include—

“(A) a description of the proposed project, including any engineering plans that must bear the seal of a professional engineer;

“(B) a description of the proposed project site or sites, including, if relevant, the nature and extent of pollution resulting from mine drainage;

“(C) identification of the past and current owners and operators of the proposed project site;

“(D) the agreement or contract between the relevant State and the Community Reclaimer to carry out the project;

“(E) a determination that the project will facilitate the activities of the State reclamation plan under subsection (e);

“(F) sufficient information to determine whether the Community Reclaimer has the technical capability and expertise to successfully conduct the proposed project;

“(G) a cost estimate for the project and evidence that the Community Reclaimer has sufficient financial resources to ensure the successful completion of the proposed project (including any operation or maintenance costs);

“(H) a schedule for completion of the project;

“(I) an agreement between the Community Reclaimer and the current owner of the site governing access to the site;

“(J) sufficient information to ensure that the Community Reclaimer meets the definition under paragraph (3);

“(K) a contingency plan designed to be used in response to unplanned adverse events that includes emergency actions, response, and notifications;

“(L) detailed plans for any proposed recycling or reprocessing of historic mine residue to be conducted by the Community Reclaimer (including a description of how all proposed recycling or reprocessing activities contribute to the remediation of the abandoned mine site); and

“(M) a requirement that the State provide notice to adjacent and downstream landowners and the public and hold a public meeting near the proposed project site before the project is initiated.

“(3) REPROCESSING OF MATERIALS.—A Community Reclaimer may reprocess materials recovered during the implementation of a remediation plan only if—

“(A) the applicable land management agency has signed a decision document approving reprocessing as part of the approved abandoned mine reclamation plan of the State;

“(B) the proceeds from the sale or use of the materials are used—

“(i) to defray the costs of the remediation; and

“(ii) to reimburse the Administrator or the head of a Federal land management agency for the purpose of carrying out this Act; and

“(C) the materials only include historic mine residue.

“(4) COMMUNITY RECLAIMER DEFINED.—For purposes of this section, the term ‘Community Reclaimer’ means any person who—

“(A) seeks to voluntarily assist a State with a reclamation project under this section, which may include companies that currently hold reclamation liability elsewhere from the proposed site or active mine sites that require a performance bond;

“(B) did not participate in any way in the creation of site conditions at the proposed project site or activities that caused any lands or waters at the proposed project site to become eligible for reclamation or drainage abatement expenditures under section 404; and

“(C) is not subject to outstanding violations listed pursuant to section 510(c).”

SEC. 4. CLARIFYING STATE LIABILITY FOR MINE DRAINAGE PROJECTS.

Section 413(d) (30 U.S.C. 1242(d)) is amended by inserting “unless such control or treatment will be conducted in accordance with a State memorandum of understanding approved under section 405(m) of this Act” after “under the Federal Water Pollution Control Act”.

SEC. 5. CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.

Section 405(f) (30 U.S.C. 1235(f)) is amended—

(1) by striking the “and” after the semicolon in paragraph (6);

(2) by striking the period at the end of paragraph (7) and inserting “; and”; and

(3) by inserting at the end the following:

“(8) a list of projects proposed under subsection (n).”

SEC. 6. SUNSET PROVISION.

This Act shall be in effect until September 30, 2030.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 6233, the bill now under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 6233, the Community Reclamation Partnerships Act.

H.R. 6233, introduced by Congressman LAHOOD, would allow States to partner with nongovernmental entities to reclaim and restore land and water resources from abandoned mines.

There are still thousands of abandoned mines in the U.S., deserted before modern regulations required mine owners and operators to adhere to strict environmental standards and implement holistic land restoration when operations cease. Many of these sites pose health risks, safety hazards, and environmental concerns for their surrounding communities.

While fees collected from current mining operations combined with Federal dollars fund States’ abandoned mine cleanup efforts, third-party nongovernmental organizations, or NGOs, have volunteered their resources to assist in abandoned mine restoration.

However, should a site deteriorate in the future after an NGO has implemented restoration efforts, that NGO could be liable for the site. H.R. 6233 aims to shield third-party nongovernmental organizations from frivolous litigation.

The Community Reclamation Partnerships Act will expedite abandoned mine reclamation efforts and improve environmental hazards, all without using taxpayer funds.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in support of H.R. 6233, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 6233, the Community Reclamation Partnerships Act.

Two centuries of coal mining occurred in the United States before the industry was federally regulated in any meaningful way, including in New Mexico where we have many abandoned wells which litter the countryside.

Before 1977, when the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act was passed, coal mining was done with little regard for the environment and absolutely minimal reclamation requirements. This history has left us with a massive number of abandoned coal mines across the country that create environmental and public health hazards.

Fortunately, last Congress, Democrats championed and passed over \$11 billion to clean up abandoned coal mines. These funds are already being deployed to clean up hazardous sites and to create good jobs.

Even with this massive investment, however, there is much work ahead of us before we solve the abandoned coal mine problem for good though.

That is where the Community Reclamation Partnerships Act fits in. This bill would provide third-party groups, like environmental or wildlife organizations, with the ability to use their own funds to clean up streams and watersheds affected by abandoned coal mines, without assuming unnecessary liability.

I am very thankful for these organizations. Many of them are recognizing the fact that these streams are essential in order to have pristine fishing conditions and other benefits to their surrounding areas.

Under current law, these third parties are required to take on full liability if they want to engage in cleanup projects. These groups often don’t have the funds or technical ability to cover cleanup all the way to full remediation. That shouldn’t mean they should be stopped from making partial but substantial improvements to the environment for their communities. We can use all the help we can get.

Therefore, this legislation would create “Good Samaritan” protections to allow these third-party groups to enter into memorandums of understanding with the State and EPA, with public feedback, to clean up a site without holding the community reclaimer to full liability.

This community reclamation program is only part of the solution to abandoned coal mine lands, but it is a step in the right direction to clean up this legacy pollution.

I am grateful for the bipartisan work on this legislation, and I am glad to see it on the floor today.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support for the bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. LAHOOD), the author of the legislation.

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge Chairman WESTERMAN for his leadership on the Committee on Natural Resources. I am honored to be here today.

I rise today, Mr. Speaker, in strong support of my bill, H.R. 6233, the Community Reclamation Partnerships Act. This legislation, which previously passed the House in the 115th Congress, will help address the complex legal and funding-related challenges for abandoned mines that we have across Illinois and the Nation.

The Community Reclamation Partnerships Act amends the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 to enable States to partner with nongovernmental entities to reclaim

abandoned mine sites and facilitate acid mine drainage cleanup across the country.

Nongovernmental entities, such as Trout Unlimited, have recognized the need for reclamation in coal communities and are willing to contribute their resources and expertise to address this problem.

Unfortunately, liability and regulatory concerns have discouraged them from partnering with the States on reclamation projects. This legislation enables NGO participation in State reclamation programs by minimizing undeserved liability and codifying proven practices established by State reclamation agencies.

This legislation also addresses a frequent problem that States experience in addressing water pollution at abandoned mine land sites. States must choose between risking noncompliance under the Clean Water Act or foregoing acid mine drainage abatement projects altogether.

Some States, for instance, like Pennsylvania, have successfully addressed this problem by establishing their own guidelines for the treatment of water pollution at abandoned mine land sites. These State-specific strategies have resulted in successful water treatment projects and a significant reduction in acid mine drainage.

Currently, State reclamation activities have been funded solely by fees levied on the coal industry over the past four decades. These fees have resulted in the reclamation of approximately \$4 billion of abandoned mine land liabilities. However, according to the Department of the Interior and EPA, the estimated remediation costs exceeds \$15 billion. The cost of reclaiming these sites will continue to strain State resources in the coming decades, and the condition of these sites will only worsen over time.

In short, this bill empowers State and local community leaders who want to assist in abandoned mine cleanup efforts so that future development can occur in these areas. No group should be punished for wanting to help their community in a responsible way.

H.R. 6233 brings more resources to bear on this considerable challenge. I urge adoption of this bill.

Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time for closing.

As noted earlier, I stand in support of this legislation and the efforts that will be made under it to have cleanup occur on these coal mines, especially, as noted, Trout Unlimited is so willing to work with local communities. They do great work in New Mexico, and we need to encourage organizations to do that. I thank the sponsor of the bill for working with Trout Unlimited.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time for closing.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 6233. This commonsense legislation streamlines abandoned mine recovery efforts and provides an alternative pathway to abandoned mine restoration without the use of government funds or the imposition of additional fees on an industry that is operating today with the highest environmental standards.

Further, this bill has bipartisan support and passed unanimously out of the Committee on Natural Resources in December of 2023. As Mr. LAHOOD mentioned, it previously passed out of committee in the 116th and 117th Congress and was passed by the House in the 115th Congress.

I urge my colleagues to come together again today to support smart, efficient legislation that is good for the taxpayers' bottom line, the environment, our States, and our communities.

I thank Congressman LAHOOD for his work to bring H.R. 6233 to the floor, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BENTZ). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6233.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

A STRONGER WORKFORCE FOR AMERICA ACT

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6655) to amend and reauthorize the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6655

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the “A Stronger Workforce for America Act”.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

Sec. 2. Effective date; transition authority.

TITLE I—WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Subtitle A—General Provisions

Sec. 101. Definitions.

Sec. 102. Table of contents amendments.

Subtitle B—System Alignment

CHAPTER 1—STATE PROVISIONS

Sec. 111. State workforce development board.

Sec. 112. Unified State plan.

CHAPTER 2—LOCAL PROVISIONS

Sec. 115. Workforce development areas.

Sec. 116. Local workforce development boards.

Sec. 117. Local plan.

CHAPTER 3—PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY

Sec. 119. Performance accountability system.

Subtitle C—Workforce Investment Activities and Providers

CHAPTER 1—WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES AND PROVIDERS

Sec. 121. Establishment of one-stop delivery systems.

Sec. 122. Identification of eligible providers and programs of training services.

CHAPTER 2—YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES

Sec. 131. Reservations; Reallocation.

Sec. 132. Use of funds for youth workforce investment activities.

CHAPTER 3—ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES

Sec. 141. State allotments.

Sec. 142. Reservations for State activities; within State allocations; Re-allocation.

Sec. 143. Use of funds for employment and training activities.

CHAPTER 4—AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS

Sec. 145. Authorization of appropriations.

Subtitle D—Job Corps

Sec. 151. Purposes.

Sec. 152. Definitions.

Sec. 153. Individuals eligible for the Job Corps.

Sec. 154. Recruitment, screening, selection, and assignment of enrollees.

Sec. 155. Job Corps Campuses.

Sec. 156. Program activities.

Sec. 157. Support.

Sec. 158. Operations.

Sec. 159. Standards of conduct.

Sec. 160. Community participation.

Sec. 161. Workforce councils.

Sec. 162. Advisory committees.

Sec. 163. Experimental projects and technical assistance.

Sec. 164. Special provisions.

Sec. 165. Management information.

Sec. 166. Job Corps oversight and reporting.

Sec. 167. Authorization of appropriations.

Subtitle E—National Programs

Sec. 171. Native American programs.

Sec. 172. Migrant and seasonal farmworker programs.

Sec. 173. Technical assistance.

Sec. 174. Evaluations and research.

Sec. 175. National dislocated worker grants.

Sec. 176. YouthBuild Program.

Sec. 178. Reentry employment opportunities.

Sec. 179. Strengthening community colleges grant program.

Sec. 180. Authorization of appropriations.

Subtitle F—Administration

Sec. 191. Requirements and restrictions.

Sec. 192. General waivers of statutory or regulatory requirements.

Sec. 193. State innovation demonstration authority.

TITLE II—ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY

Sec. 201. Purpose.

Sec. 202. Definitions.

Sec. 203. Authorization of appropriations.

Sec. 204. Special rule.

Sec. 205. Performance accountability system.

Sec. 206. Matching requirement.

Sec. 207. State leadership activities.

Sec. 208. Programs for corrections education and other institutionalized individuals.

Sec. 209. Grants and contracts for eligible providers.