

Wednesday, December 5, 2012

Washington, D.C. – Representatives Ben Ray Luján (NM-3) and Steve Pearce (NM-2) sent a letter to House leaders today urging them to bring legislation to the House floor for a vote that provides New Mexico with a vital opportunity to tap into critical existing funding to clean up abandoned uranium mines.

Luján and Pearce called for a vote on S. 897, which amends the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (SMCRA) and was introduced in the Senate by Senator Jeff Bingaman. Rep. Pearce introduced the companion bill in the House, H.R. 785, which Rep. Luján joined as an original cosponsor. The legislation has passed with unanimous support both in the Senate and in the House Natural Resources Committee. House passage of S. 897 is the final step to get the legislation to the President's desk for his signature.

Below is the text of the letter:

December 5, 2012

Speaker John Boehner
Capitol Building, H-232
Washington, DC 20515

Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi
Capitol Building, H-204
Washington, DC 20515

Majority Leader Eric Cantor
Capitol Building, H-329
Washington, DC 20515

Minority Whip Steny Hoyer
Capitol Building, H-148
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressional Leadership:

Earlier this year, the House Natural Resources Committee passed S. 897 unanimously by voice vote. S. 897 was introduced by Senator Jeff Bingaman and passed unanimously in the Senate. The bill seeks to amend the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (SMCRA) to allow New Mexico and other states to use federal funding to clean up uranium mines. After being reported out of Committee, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) found that this bill would have “no significant impact on direct spending” and is budget neutral. As House Report 112-429 indicates, the legislation does not contain any congressional earmarks or unfunded mandates.

New Mexico has a long history of contributing to the national security of our nation. During World War II and the Cold War, the mining and processing of uranium for our nuclear weapons production was conducted in many areas across the state. Today, the legacy of abandoned uranium mines has negatively impacted public health, public safety, and environmental health for generations of New Mexicans, especially those in minority and tribal communities. This important bill will provide New Mexico with a vital opportunity to tap into critical existing funding to clean up abandoned uranium mines at no additional cost to the federal government.

As this bill has been duly examined by both House and Senate committees and passed by the full U.S. Senate, we urge the leaders of the House to bring this bipartisan and noncontroversial measure to the floor on the Suspension Calendar so it can be passed into law. Thank you in advance for your consideration and please feel free to contact our offices if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Ben Ray Luján
Member of Congress

Stevan Pearce
Member of Congress

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