

**Congressman Hal Rogers**  
**Statement for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee Markup**  
**H.R. 1731, RECLAIM Act of 2017**

Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva, and members of the committee, thank you for your consideration of the RECLAIM Act of 2017.

Chairman Bishop, I am particularly grateful to you and your staff, who have worked closely with me over the last year to perfect the bill and prepare it for consideration by the Committee. Chairman Gosar and Ranking Member Lowenthal on the subcommittee have been incredible partners, and I am grateful for their interest and engagement.

I would also like to thank the cosponsors of the RECLAIM Act in the House, as well as Senators McConnell and Capito for taking the lead on this important effort in the Senate. I am pleased that this bill has enjoyed bipartisan support in both the 114<sup>th</sup> and 115<sup>th</sup> Congress, and I am hopeful that we can maintain this nonpartisan spirit as the bill makes its way through the House.

In the year since the RECLAIM Act was first introduced, I have worked alongside this Committee to incorporate input from stakeholders from all over the country. We sought out the opinion of States, advocacy groups and Members of Congress from coal country, who want to see this bill through to the finish line. Their feedback has been a critical part of moving this bill forward and we appreciate their support.

Mr. Chairman, I sponsored the RECLAIM Act to help revitalize coal communities all across the nation that have been devastated by the downturn of the coal industry. In my District in Eastern Kentucky, we have lost nearly 12,000 coal mining jobs over the last eight years. Families that relied on good paying jobs in the mines are now going bankrupt. Our small counties that once received sizable revenues from coal severance tax dollars are struggling to provide basic services. And in some small towns, we have more plywood-boarded windows than paned-glass. These are hardworking people who are looking for opportunities, and the RECLAIM Act stands to create thousands of good paying jobs in the communities that need it most.

The RECLAIM Act will do two things: one, reclaim abandoned mine lands to clean up our environment; and two, spur economic development on that land to reuse it for job creation and business development. One of the greatest things about the RECLAIM Act, is that it doesn't cost taxpayers a dime. There is approximately \$2.4 billion in the unappropriated balance of the Abandoned Mine Lands Fund that remains untouched. This bill will fast-track the release of \$1 billion of that available money to states, including Kentucky, that have been hit hard by the downturn in the coal industry.

While RECLAIM will undoubtedly be an economic and environmental boon to Appalachian states, each and every coal producing state across the country actually stands to benefit from this bill. Under this program, \$200 million will be distributed to States and tribes

annually for five years for the purpose of cleaning up abandoned mine land. \$195 million will be distributed to uncertified states, while certified states and tribes will be eligible to compete for \$5 million in grants each year. States and local governments should leverage these dollars to secure other sources of public and private funding for the development of these sites. A municipal entity could secure funding from the State or a federal agency to lay a water line, create hiking trails, help a small business grow their footprint or attract new industry. The possibilities are endless.

I am so confident in the revitalizing potential of the RECLAIM Act because it follows the successful implementation of the AML Pilot Project, which was first enacted in the 2016 Omnibus Appropriations bill and continued in Fiscal Year 2017. The \$90 million program, spearheaded in Kentucky, Pennsylvania and West Virginia, was created to pilot the concepts inherent in this bill: providing coal communities with grants to reclaim abandoned mine lands with economic development purposes in mind, create new job opportunities and stimulate the local economy. The AML Pilot program has already allowed these three States to break ground on dozens of new job-creating, revenue-generating projects. Some of these projects include:

- a wildlife recreational trail and education center in Kentucky,
- an agriculture training program for veterans in West Virginia,
- and a botanic gardens project in Pennsylvania.

The RECLAIM Act will build on the momentum generated by the pilot and make countless new job-creating projects a reality. This bill represents a real investment in coal country – one that will provide much needed resources to clean up the environment, create jobs and strengthen these communities from the ground up.

I thank you all for your support and collaboration, and I look forward to a continued partnership as this bill move through the legislative process. I yield back.