September 19, 2024

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Raul Grijalva
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Westerman and Ranking Member Grijalva:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations representing academia and industry, including the nearly 1.3 million hardworking men and women directly and indirectly employed in the mining industry, we write to express our strong support for the bipartisan and bicameral Mining Schools Act and urge your support to advance the legislation into law.

Global demand for energy and minerals is soaring. Benchmark Mineral Intelligence has forecasts that, based on average mine size, 384 new mines are needed by 2035 just to meet the demand for electric vehicles and energy storage batteries.[1] Further, the Department of Energy now expects U.S. electricity demand to double by 2050.[2] In order to meet these huge demands, the mining and mineral sector must recruit, educate, train, and develop a versatile workforce prepared to address the technical engineering and social components of responsible mining operations—from community engagement, exploration, permitting, extraction, and processing to recycling, mine closure and reclamation. Unfortunately, like in many industries today, attracting and retaining great talent in the mining sector is a challenge.

In 2022, only 600 students were enrolled in U.S. mining engineering programs while China – which has 45 mining engineering programs – currently enrolls nearly 12,000 students and graduates approximately 3,000 annually.[3] This shocking disparity must be quickly addressed. The bipartisan and bicameral Mining Schools Act supports the recruitment, training, and development of skilled professionals in the field of mining that are urgently needed to meet growing energy and mineral demands. It further strengthens programs related to exploration, extraction, processing, refining, reclamation, reprocessing and innovative technologies for hardrock minerals and coal products to improve efficiencies and reduce U.S. dependence on imports.

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[1] Benchmark Minerals. (Sept. 6, 2022). *More than 300 new mines required to meet battery demand by 2035*. https://source.benchmarkminerals.com/article/more-than-300-new-mines-required-to-meet-battery-demand-by-2035

[2] Department of Energy. https://liftoff.energy.gov/demandgrowth/#:~:text=Electricity%20demand%20is%20expected%20to,transport%2C%20building%2C%20industrial

[3] National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2024). *Building capacity for the U.S. mineral resources workforce: Proceedings of a workshop*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/27733

It is important to recognize that Mining schools play a vital role in educating the future mining and mineral workforce while advancing sustainable mining practices through interdisciplinary collaboration and research. As a highly technical and evolving field, the mining industry employs leading technologies in engineering, autonomy, mobility, active safety, and advanced data and analytical sciences. An educated and nimble workforce that can meet these challenges head on is critical to driving innovation for the next generation of mining and processing technologies. This is further aided by the close working relationships between mining schools, the mining industry and others in the mineral supply chain, national laboratories, state and federal agencies, as well as local communities to address the unique complexity of modern mining and mineral supply chains.

The bipartisan Mining Schools Act, which has passed the U.S. Senate by unanimous consent, helps to bridge the generational workforce gap by ensuring that academic institutions can support the next generation of miners by continuing to develop their skills alongside technological advancements, driving innovation and improving best practices. This bill is an investment in U.S. economic stability, energy independence, and national security. We urge your support to advance this important legislation into law.

Sincerely,

Alabama Mining Association
Alaska Miners Association
American Exploration & Mining
    Association
Arizona Mining Association
Colorado Mining Association
Georgia Mining Association
Idaho Mining Association
Iron Mining Association of Minnesota
Kentucky Coal Association
Mining Minnesota
Montana Mining Association
National Mining Association
Nevada Mining Association
New Mexico Mining Association
Pennsylvania Coal Alliance
Rocky Mountain Mining Institute
Society for Mining, Metallurgy &
    Exploration
Texas Mining and Reclamation
    Association
Utah Mining Association
Women's Mining Coalition
Wyoming Mining Association

College of Mines and Earth Sciences,
    University of Utah
Colorado School of Mines
Michigan Technological University
Missouri University of Science and
    Technology
Montana Technological University
New Mexico Institute of Mining and
    Technology
Penn State University
South Dakota School of Mines and
    Technology
University of Alaska System
University of Arizona
University of Nevada—Reno
Virginia Tech
West Virginia University