

May 5, 2025

The Honorable Bruce Westerman, Chairman  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C., 20515

The Honorable Jared Huffman, Ranking Member  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
1332 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C., 20515

Dear Chairman Westerman and Ranking Member Huffman,

On behalf of Northern Plains Resource Council and our 2,000 members throughout Montana along with our local affiliate group, Bull Mountain Land Alliance, we write to express our opposition to the provisions outlined in the House Committee on Natural Resources' budget reconciliation recommendations. We believe that these recommendations undermine American taxpayers, and we are concerned that they will irreparably harm our rural communities and working landscapes.

The proposed recommendations would subsidize coal corporations at the expense of American taxpayers. The public entrusts Congress with the authority to negotiate a fair return on the extraction of our publicly owned resources, and the proposed reduction in coal royalty payments from 12.5% to 7% represents a failure to meet this responsibility. There is hardly a more clear example of government waste than Congress choosing to gratuitously subsidize coal companies by cutting royalty rates by more than 45%. Not only does this rate reduction take a revenue stream away from our federal government, but our state and local governments will also lose. As more efficient energy sources outcompete coal in the market, Congress should not be subsidizing a declining industry for the sake of political posturing.

Additionally, our members who live and work in the Bull Mountains are concerned by efforts to evade the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process as it pertains to a coal mine in their community. Sec. 80144 authorizes an 800-acre expansion of the Bull Mountains coal mine, sidestepping a court-ordered environmental impact statement (EIS) and cutting the public out of the process entirely. The NEPA process is not just a series of bureaucratic hoops to jump through; it is the mechanism by which the public – including adjacent landowners and ranchers who stand to be directly impacted by a given outcome – can have a say in determining the future of their community. Since the Bull Mountains mine began operating in 2009, no EIS has ever been completed to evaluate the impacts that industrial longwall coal mining will have on surface and groundwater resources, the local economy, and neighboring residents. Already, once-reliable springs have run dry, subsidence cracks have opened across pastures, and generational ranchers have been forced to sell their land. Sidestepping this EIS analysis only serves the interests of the

corporate owners of the Bull Mountains mine, and it leaves local residents and landowners in the dark about the future of their homes.

We urge you to stand up for taxpayers, rural communities, and hardworking Americans by opposing these provisions.

Sincerely,

Edward Barta, Chairman  
Northern Plains Resource Council

Tom Baratta, Chairman  
Bull Mountain Land Alliance