

HNR Member Day
Wednesday, May 14th, 2025
Longworth 1324

Chairman Westerman, Ranking Member Huffman, and
Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am grateful for the chance to advocate for my district and the people of Eastern Montana. I'm here to discuss two critical pieces of legislation: H.R. 725, the Crow Revenue Act, and H.R. 931, both essential for keeping coal mining alive in Montana.

The Bull Mountains Mine in Musselshell County is the state's only underground coal mine, providing good-paying jobs for hundreds of Montanans. However, Washington's regulatory environment, combined with malicious litigation and judicial activism, has pushed Signal Peak to the brink. Challenges with permitting, limited access to federal coal, and regulatory uncertainty threaten the mine's future. If the mine closes, the impact will be devastating for families in towns like Roundup, and the ripple effects will spread throughout Musselshell County.

When I visited the mine, I spoke with workers who expressed deep concern about the mine's future. Permitting delays and a lack of access to coal have made it harder to maintain operations. This is not just about energy policy, it's about protecting paychecks and ensuring that Montana families can keep working in good-paying jobs. If Signal Peak shuts down, it will have serious consequences for rural communities across the region.

That's why I introduced H.R. 931 and H.R. 725. These two pieces of legislation are designed to address these challenges directly and ensure the future of coal mining in Montana. H.R. 931, scheduled for a hearing later this month, offers a short-term solution to keep Signal Peak operating. By opening up specific federal tracts of land for mining, this bill provides the mine with enough coal to continue operations for another year. This will prevent layoffs and provide workers with stability while we work toward a more permanent solution.

H.R. 725, the Crow Revenue Act, is the long-term fix that will allow the mine to continue for years to come. This bill facilitates a critical land exchange that unlocks access to additional federally owned coal reserves, ensuring Signal Peak's future. Without H.R. 725, the mine will run out of minable coal, but with this bill, we can keep the mine running and support good-paying jobs in Montana.

More importantly, H.R. 725 also addresses the Crow Tribe's need for a revenue stream. Prior to the closure of the Absaloka mine, the Tribe had a revenue-sharing agreement with the operation, but with its shutdown, the Tribe no longer receives coal revenue. This bill ensures the Tribe will regain access to these vital funds by securing a share of the proceeds from coal mined at Signal Peak. Restoring this revenue will help fund essential services, education, and infrastructure for the Tribe, creating new opportunities for economic development and self-sufficiency.

This bill is a critical step in rebuilding the Tribe's economic

foundation, which has been undermined by the loss of coal revenue since Absaloka's closure. H.R. 725 provides the Crow Tribe with the resources it needs to grow and thrive, and it ensures that the mine continues to provide jobs for Montana workers.

Together, H.R. 931 and H.R. 725 offer a comprehensive solution to the challenges facing Signal Peak Mine, its workers, and the Crow Tribe. H.R. 931 ensures immediate relief for the mine, while H.R. 725 provides long-term stability and access to critical coal reserves. This is a Montana solution with Montana support. The Crow Tribe, the state of Montana, and leaders from both chambers of Congress all back these efforts, recognizing the importance of these bills to our economy and our communities.

In closing, I urge my colleagues to support both H.R. 931 and H.R. 725. These bills are not just about coal. They are about jobs, economic stability, and securing a brighter future for the people of Montana. They are about keeping Montana families employed and ensuring the Crow Tribe has the resources it needs to prosper. By passing these bills, we can preserve our workforce, promote energy independence, and ensure that our rural communities continue to thrive.

Thank you, Chairman Westerman, Ranking Member Huffman, and Members of the Committee, for your time and consideration. I look forward to working with you to get these bills across the finish line.