



CONCRETE PUMPING COMPANY INC.

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March 22, 2019

The Hon. Raul M. Grijalva, Chairman
The Hon. Rob Bishop, Ranking Member
The Hon. Alan Lowenthal, Subcommittee on Energy and Natural Resources, Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Reauthorization of the Collection Fees Supporting the Abandoned Mine Land Fund

Dear Representatives,

I am writing in support for the reauthorization of the collection fees associated with the Surface Mine Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) of 1977. Over a century of unregulated coal mining practices took a huge toll on the land and water where mining occurred. The multitude of problems created by the legacy of mining, which include mine subsidence, mine fires, acid mine drainage, open pits and shafts, highwalls, black damp, and more, are complex and difficult to fix. They often require specialized engineering and construction know-how. The AML funds and the programs they support advance the science and practice of this specialized know-how, resulting in many clean-up and mitigation successes over the past 40 years. As a business owner who regularly works as a contractor to these programs, I believe it is importation that you understand all the many benefits to the AML funding.

JOB CREATION. The growth of our family business over the years is largely due to the AML program, and its efforts to remediate the past sins of the mining industry. Howard Concrete Pumping Co., Inc., founded in 1972, has grown from a small, one-person operation to a medium sized business with offices in several states. We now have over 100 employees and invest multi-millions of dollars every year in specialty heavy equipment. In some years, as much as 50% of our annual gross and 50% of our workforce can be attributed to the AML program. Our employees include engineers, professional geologists, and specialty union tradesmen. These career opportunities have provided steady employment with salaries and wages far above industry standards that cannot be outsourced to foreign countries with cheap labor and few, if any, environmental protections. Additionally, our work force not only works in the communities that are being remediated, but they also live in those same communities. Finally, my business is not alone in serving the AML programs. I have many peers who are engineers and contractors that are often small, family-owned businesses.

ECONOMIC INVESTMENT. Our capital investments for equipment dedicated to the AML program averages approximately \$2.5 million annually. This includes specialty equipment like drill rigs, concrete pumps, batch plants, front-end loaders, specialty mine cameras, and more. This equipment is American made, often by small

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manufacturers. From a business owner's perspective, these substantial capital investments require funding certainty.

ENVIRONMENTAL CLEAN-UP. Without the AML funding, these environmental hazards and pollution will not be remedied. The cost of these remediation programs are often cost prohibitive for conventional real estate developers, or these hazards exist in communities developed many decades ago and lack economic incentive for redevelopment. Thus, entire communities and regions lack the capital needed to fix these problems for future generations.

In Pennsylvania, where the scars of mining are especially severe and pervasive, there is a prime example of how detrimental these hazards can be. Located in the eastern part of the state, Centralia is an entire community that has been condemned and abandoned for decades because of an actively-burning mine. Please consider the immeasurable damage done over the past decades with no tax base, no economic growth, and no hope for future generations to own homes and raise families

PROTECTING HOME OWNERSHIP AND PUBLIC SAFETY. The AML funds, in many ways, support the American dream of home ownership and promote public safety. Mine subsidence can be an especially sudden and catastrophic event in which the collapse of old, subsurface mines can cause significant earth movements at the surface. Millions of homes, churches, schools, and hospitals across the United States are built on top of these old mines, and property owners are often unaware of this fact until it is too late. Homeowners can be awoken in the middle of the night to find a major portion of their home collapsed into a subsurface void. The damage can be so severe that they are required to vacate, and their homes are condemned, representing a complete loss of their most significant, lifetime investment. In my professional experience, I have seen the AML funds administered to prevent mine subsidence through drilling/grouting for homes, churches, schools, and hospitals, promoting safer communities and increasing property values.

Funding for reclamation activities is derived from a fee on every ton of coal mined in the U.S. since 1977. Those fees are placed into an account known as the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund. The collection of these fees is set to expire in September of 2021. However, it is estimated that billions of dollars of investment is needed nationwide to remediate just the known mine hazard sites. The benefits of the AML funding, which include: environmental remediation and clean-up, promotion of small businesses, creation of middle class jobs, investment in American manufacturers, protecting the American dream of home ownership, and increasing public safety, are causes worthy of support by all political affiliations. If I can answer any questions regarding my experiences with the AML funds and remediating abandoned mines, please feel free to contact me at your convenience.

Very truly yours,

HOWARD CONCRETE PUMPING CO., INC.



Frank M. Howard, III

Treasurer

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