

2000 SESSION

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HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 6

Offered January 24, 2000

Memorializing the President of the United States and the Congress to work together to reform the financial structure of the Coal Industry Retiree Health Benefit Act.

Patrons—Stump, Johnson, Kilgore, Phillips, Shuler and Tate; Senators: Marye, Puckett and Wampler

Referred to Committee on Mining and Mineral Resources

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Virginia is a coal-producing and coal-consuming state that has benefited tremendously from the hard, dangerous work of retired coal miners; and

WHEREAS, the United States government entered into a contract with coal miners in 1946 that created the United Mine Workers of America Health and Retirement Funds; and

WHEREAS, this contract was signed in the White House in a ceremony with President Harry Truman; and

WHEREAS, a federal commission established by United States Secretary of Labor Elizabeth Dole concluded in 1990 that "retired coal miners have legitimate expectations of health care benefits for life; that was the promise they received during their working lives and that is how they planned their retirement years. That commitment should be honored"; and

WHEREAS, this promise became law in 1992 when Congress passed, and President George Bush signed, the Coal Industry Retiree Health Benefit Act (known as the Coal Act); and

WHEREAS, the Coal Act reiterated the promise of lifetime health benefits for retired coal miners and their dependents; and

WHEREAS, Congress intended the Coal Act "(1) to remedy problems with the provision and funding of health care benefits with respect to the beneficiaries of multiemployer benefit plans that provide health care benefits to retirees in the coal industry; (2) to allow for sufficient operating assets for such plans; and (3) to provide for the continuation of a privately financed self-sufficient program for the delivery of health care benefits to the beneficiaries of such plans"; and

WHEREAS, certain court decisions have eroded the financial structure that Congress put in place under the Coal Act; and

WHEREAS, these court decisions have placed the continued provision of health benefits to retired coal miners in jeopardy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, by the House of Delegates, That the President and the Congress of the United States be urged to work together to reform the financial structure of the Coal Act to ensure that retired coal miners continue to receive the health care benefits they were promised and so rightly deserve; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit copies of this resolution to the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the President of the United States Senate, and the members of the Virginia Congressional Delegation in order that they may be apprised of the sense of the Virginia General Assembly in this matter.

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