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HOUSE BILL NO. 2213

Offered January 13, 2021

Prefiled January 13, 2021

A BILL to require a study of gold mining in the Commonwealth by July 1, 2023, and to prohibit the issuance of certain mining permits until July 1, 2024; report.

Patrons—Guzman, Cole, J.G., Keam, Kory, Levine, Samirah, Simon, Simonds and Willett

Referred to Committee on Rules

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. *That the Secretary of Natural Resources, the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, and the Secretary of Commerce and Trade shall conduct a study of the mining and processing of gold in the Commonwealth in consultation with (i) the Virginia Council on Environmental Justice established pursuant to Article 36 (§ 2.2-2699.8 et seq.) of Chapter 26 of Title 2.2 of the Code of Virginia and (ii) appropriate stakeholders, including experts in mining, hydrology, toxicology, geology, and public health; environmental organizations; representatives of potentially affected communities in localities with significant deposits of gold; and residents of Native American communities in such localities. The study shall (a) evaluate the impacts of the mining and processing of gold on public health, safety, and welfare in the Commonwealth; (b) evaluate whether existing air and water quality regulations are sufficient to protect air and water quality in the Commonwealth from the mining and processing of gold; (c) consider which processing and beneficiation techniques for gold, including cyanide heap leaching and cyanide vat leaching, should be permitted in the Commonwealth; (d) evaluate the impacts on local water quality and on downstream communities of contamination from tailings resulting from the mining or processing of gold; (e) evaluate whether existing bonding, reclamation, closure, and long-term monitoring of sites for such mining or processing are sufficient; (f) make a recommendation as to whether the issuance of any new permit to operate an open pit or underground mine for any gold in the Commonwealth should be prohibited; and (g) report its findings to the General Assembly by July 1, 2023.*

§ 2. *Until July 1, 2024, the Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy shall not issue any new permit to operate a gold mine of an area larger than 10 acres in the Commonwealth. Such prohibition shall not apply to any restricted permit issued pursuant to § 45.1-180.4 of the Code of Virginia.*

INTRODUCED

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