

signed the 1872 General Mining Law, I am introducing legislation to provide much-needed fiscal and environmental oversight for the hardrock mining industry operating on Federal lands.

This legislation would overhaul that antiquated statute penned into law by President Grant on May 10, 1872—a law that contains no environmental protection provisions governing the mining of hardrock minerals such as platinum, gold, silver, and copper on public domain lands in the western States. The 1872 Mining Law also allows extraction of these minerals from the public domain without the payment of a royalty to the American taxpayers, and it allows a mining company to purchase mineral rich public lands for no more than \$2.50 or \$5 an acre, irrespective of the land's true value.

This legislation would bring the hardrock mining law into the 21st century.

The lack of a royalty in the 1872 Mining Law and the absence of deterrents or penalties for irresponsible mining have caused enormous taxpayer giveaways and liabilities. Under the Mining Law the Federal Government has handed out over \$245 billion in mineral rich public lands.

To be sure, Congress has attempted to reform the Mining Law at various times over its history—only to be thwarted each time by powerful mining interests. Former Congressman Mo Udall came close to achieving reform of the mining law in the 1970's. During the 102nd Congress in 1991, I introduced mining reform legislation. And we came close to enacting legislation that would have reformed this archaic law in 1994. But, at the last moment, after both the House and the Senate had passed separate bills, the Conference failed to reach a compromise, and the rest, as they say, is history. Since then, I have re-introduced reform legislation in each succeeding Congress.

Many Americans support reform and question why Congress does not address this issue. These people believe that American taxpayers are being robbed every time a multinational conglomerate breaks U.S. ground and mines our valuable minerals for free.

It is time, well past time, that the Congress replace this archaic law with one that reflects our values and goals. Ensuring a fair return to the public in exchange for the disposition of public resources and properly managing our public lands are neither Republican nor Democratic issues. They are simply goals that make sense if we are to be good stewards of America's lands and meet our responsibilities to the American people.

Madam Speaker, during the years I have labored to reform the Mining Law of 1872 those who defend its privileges—and it is indeed a privilege to be deemed the highest and best use of our public domain lands—have often alleged that reform legislation fails to take into account the contribution of hardrock mining to area economies. They claim that reform would have dire consequences on the industry, that if we do not provide the industry with unfettered access to public lands and public minerals, the industry could no longer survive.

Let me just say at the outset that there is no Member in the House of Representatives whose Congressional District is more dependent upon mining for employment and its economic benefits than this gentleman from West Virginia. And when we are talking about the

effects of mining, I would suggest that there is little difference between coal mining and gold mining. The effects, whether measured in terms of employment, or in terms of the environment, are the same.

With that noted, I have engaged in the effort to reform the Mining Law of 1872 these past many years not just for the apparent reasons—valuable minerals mined for free, Federal lands available almost for free, and no comprehensive Federal mining and reclamation standards. But also because I am pro-mining, because I no longer believe that we can expect a viable hard rock mining industry to exist on public domain lands in the future if we do not make corrections to the law today. I do so because there are provisions of the existing law which impede efficient and serious mineral exploration and development. And I do so because of the unsettled political climate governing this activity, with reform coming, if not in a comprehensive fashion, certainly on a piecemeal basis.

So I say to my colleagues from the Western States who resist reform, I understand your concerns. I have been in your situation. In 1977 I served on what is now called the Natural Resources Committee as a young freshman. I was confronted by legislation being advanced by my chairman, Mo Udall. And I recall that the coal industry was dragged kicking and screaming into the debate that led to the enactment of the Surface-Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977.

I voted for that legislation. It was not an easy thing for me to do. But I voted for that bill because in my region of the country we were grappling with a legacy of acidified streams, highwalls, refuse piles, open mine shafts, and other hazards associated with coal mining practices. That is a legacy, I would submit, that we are faced with today on lands administered by the Forest Service and the BLM in the western States due to hardrock mining practices.

The fact of the matter is that the gloom and doom predictions made by industry against the Federal strip mining act all those years ago did not materialize. Predictions, I would note, that are almost to the word identical to those which industry has leveled at times against this Mining law of 1872 reform legislation.

Yet, today, the coalfields of this Nation are a much better place in which to live. And today, we are producing more coal than ever before.

Certainly, coal continues to have its controversies, whether they involve mountaintop removal coal mining or the problems we are having with coal waste impoundments. But at least there are laws on the books to deal with those situations.

At least there are in place basic Federal mining and reclamation performance standards. At least when one mines coal on Federal lands a royalty is paid to the Federal Government. And at least we are making provision for the restoration of lands left abandoned by past coal mining practices.

None of this exists with respect to hardrock mining under the Mining Law of 1872.

I believe that with enough courage, and fortitude, we can continue to address the problems facing mining, and dovetail our need for energy and minerals with the necessity of protecting our environment.

For at stake here in this debate over the Mining Law of 1872 is the health, welfare, and

environmental integrity of our people and our Federal lands. At stake is the public interest of all Americans. And at stake is the ability of the hardrock mining industry to continue to operate on public domain lands in the future, to produce those minerals that are necessary to maintain our standard of living.

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RESPONSIBILITY TO IRAQI  
REFUGEES ACT

**HON. EARL BLUMENAUER**

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 10, 2007*

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, today, along with Congresswoman JAN SCHAKOWSKY and Congressman CHRISTOPHER SHAYS, I am introducing the "Responsibility to Iraqi Refugees Act." Iraq is the world's fastest growing refugee crisis, yet the U.S. response has been minimal.

For one group in particular, however, our moral responsibility is unquestionable—Iraqis who are at risk because they helped the United States. Having cooperated with the United States military, the United Nations or even with a nongovernmental organization can literally mean a death sentence at the hands of any of the many sides in this civil war.

Our legislation would admit Iraqis to the United States who are at risk because they helped coalition or reconstruction efforts in Iraq, establish a Special Coordinator for Iraqi Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons and require strategies to ensure the well-being and safety of Iraqi refugees in the region; and increase the number of persecuted Iraqis who can be admitted to the United States as refugees.

I urge every Member of the House to co-sponsor this broad, ambitious and comprehensive response to the Iraqi refugee crisis before it is too late for the people whose only crime was working with Americans.

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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY  
AUTHORIZATION ACT  
FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

SPEECH OF

**HON. JOHN D. DINGELL**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 9, 2007*

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1684) to authorize appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security for fiscal year 2008, and for other purposes:

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Chairman, Representative CARDOZA will highlight the importance of communications interoperability for our Nation's first responders, and the urgent need for cost-effective and forward-looking technology solutions. Last year, Congress established an interoperability grant program at the Department of Commerce to draw upon its spectrum and telecommunications expertise. This program is distinct from efforts by DHS, which, as evidenced by a recent report of the Government Accountability Office, still need much work to achieve full interoperability across our Nation.