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Letter: Senate should seek balance in mining law

It's great to see the U.S. Senate taking a responsible stance on the issue of mine law reform. In the Jan. 25 Gazette article entitled "Senators indicate support for reform of mining law," Noelle Straub highlighted the need for a fair and responsible approach to be taken by the Senate in updating the mining law. The balance between environmental protection and economic prosperity is a delicate one, a balance where one should not be sacrificed for the other.

Some of the provisions passed by the House last year go too far. They would place an 8 percent royalty on new mines - the world's highest - and a 4 percent royalty on existing operations. This additional tax on current mining operations was not accounted for when mines began operations. Placing additional operating costs on the mines could force some mines out of business. With the possibility of a recession, the government should not be placing mandates on industry that could cost America jobs.

Straub also points out that the bill passed by the House has a provision that allows for political appointees to veto a mining operation even if it has met all other permit and public hearing requirements. This could potentially result in arbitrary rulings based more on politics than on economic or environmental information.

The Senate needs to reform the mining law in a way that will both protect America's treasured natural environment and provide a fair rate of return to the taxpayers, all the while encouraging the economic prosperity of America.

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