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Published on Monday, March 31, 2008.
Last modified on 3/31/2008 at 12:32 am

Letter: Remember jobs when reforming mining law

On March 11 in The Gazette was an ad on page 7A about American Minerals and the Mining Law. I recently heard on the radio the same ad by the National Mining Association referencing the U.S. Senate's work to update our nation's mining laws. After doing some research, I realized how on target these ads are. Keeping jobs here in Montana and providing a secure, domestic source of minerals to meet our national needs should be at the heart of any mining law reform.

Last year the House of Representatives passed HR 2262, a bill that would levy an 8 percent royalty on new hard-rock mining operations and a retroactive 4 percent royalty on existing operations. If passed in its current form, it would make American minerals and mining operations the highest taxed in the world. Such high taxes may force mining operations to shut down, resulting in the loss of American jobs and the loss of much needed sources of economic prosperity for our local communities.

As our nation slips further and further towards a possible recession, our leaders in Washington should be doing everything they can to promote the economic health of our nation. America needs a mining law that doesn't penalize hard-rock miners and export valuable mining jobs. I hope that Sens. Baucus and Tester take this into account as they work with their colleagues to find a sensible solution in updating America's mining law.

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