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Letter: Don't raise taxes on Butte copper mines

I have been involved in the mining industry in some way or another for the last 37 years. I have seen the laws that protect not only the environment but individual safety and productivity change for the better. We cannot let over taxation hamper our efforts of helping fuel the economy of our state and nation. I saw the state of Montana's "coal severance tax" cripple the coal industry with a tax that was incredibly high to where most of the production went to Wyoming. The jobs of thousands of people here, directly or indirectly, rely on hard rock mining that produces metals and minerals needed by a growing economy and a strong national defense. Now some in Congress want to tax the industry out of business by imposing the highest mining royalty found anywhere in the world.

Here in Butte, we have one of the highest producing copper mines in the world, and those of us in the mining community support a fair payment on profits earned from mineral mining on public lands, in addition to the fees our companies already pay. These high paying jobs did not exist several years ago. The price of copper is where they can mine competitively and has raised the quality of life here in Butte. However, we do not support royalty payment that would tax our industry and our jobs away.

William O. Penn
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