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Mining bill threatens industry, our economy

By *JOHN ELLISON*

We may be on the verge of losing a significant part of our hardrock mining industry, but there's still time to do something about it. Right now, Congress is about to consider a bill that makes radical and unwise changes to our mining law.

The bill, HR 2262, makes America's already high-cost mining business environment the most expensive in the world, rendering American minerals uncompetitive on the world market and making hardrock mining economically unfeasible here at home. This would devastate our communities and minerals in America.

Specifically, the bill would place the highest tax in the world on U.S. mining operations, forcing new operations to pay a whopping 8 percent royalty and imposing a retroactive 4 percent royalty on existing operations that were never designed to be able to absorb such a cost. And, it would further muddy the economic waters by giving political appointees and unelected bureaucrats the ability to stop a mining project, even if all the permits have been obtained and the project is in compliance with all environmental and legal requirements.

Together, these bad ideas would have a chilling effect on our domestic hardrock mining industry. The result would be to make America dependent upon foreign sources of minerals which would be subject to manipulation of supplies and increasing prices. Consumers would suffer, and our country would be less secure.

But, perhaps most importantly, we would face the potential loss of thousands of valuable, high paying mining jobs as they are in effect exported to other, more mining-friendly countries.

We simply can't afford to let this happen. Our national security and our mining communities depend on us taking action now to stop this ill-advised plan. Everyone who cares about our economy and our mining heritage should call your congressman now and tell him to vote NO on HR 2262.

John Ellison is chairman of the Elko County Commission.