

2-14 Letters: Mining legislation

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Senate must craft legislation to protect mines, environment

Editor:

Last year, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Hardrock Mining and Reclamation Act that will certainly cost America jobs.

In an update to a federal mining law that dates back to 1872, the House voted to impose royalties on mining operations that are conducted on federal lands. Not only would a royalty of 8 percent be placed on future operations, but all existing operations would be subject to a 4 percent royalty, as well. Additionally, the bill would place veto power on new mining operations in the hands of a political appointee.

Thankfully, the Senate is taking a closer look at this and held hearings on the issue recently. I hope the Senate version protects Colorado's communities and jobs that rely on the economic stability of the industry.

The public deserves to be compensated by the mining industry at a fair and reasonable rate, but placing the world's highest royalty fee on U.S. mining operations will have unintended consequences. Jobs could be cut or existing mines shut down because the additional royalty fee is so high.

Additionally, allowing a political appointee who may not have any mining background the ability to veto mine development is a frightening proposition. Partisan politics should not stand in the way of economic development when the requirements of all other laws and regulations — including environmental laws — have been met.

The Senate is working to craft a solution that is both progressive and fair. Hopefully, our very own Sen. Ken Salazar will be a champion for Colorado as the members of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee work to find a happy medium, protecting both the environment and our livelihoods

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