

Remarks by Mr. Lujan
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
Legislative Hearing **H.R. 785 (Pearce)**
02/17/2012

Mr. Chairman – I'm here today in support of the amendments to the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, or SMCRA, that would allow the state of New Mexico to be approved to utilize Abandoned Mine Land Program Funding (AML) for the purpose of cleaning abandoned uranium mines. I want to thank my Colleague Mr. Pearce for introducing a House version of this bill that has been introduced by the New Mexico delegation for the past several congresses.

Both H.R. 785 and S.897 are bills to amend the SMCRA of 1977 to clarify that uncertified States, like New Mexico, and Indian tribes, like the Pueblo of Laguna, have the authority to use certain payments for certain non-coal reclamation projects and acid mine remediation programs to address the uranium legacy problem that has plagued New Mexico for decades. This legislation is non-controversial and has bipartisan support in both the House and the Senate. Last year, S.897, the bill introduced in the Senate by Senator Jeff Bingaman, passed without amendment by Unanimous Consent on November 2, 2011 and was subsequently referred to the House Natural Resources Committee.

Speedy passage of these amendments is critical for New Mexico and I hope that the chairman of the subcommittee and the chairman of the full committee will work with the New Mexico delegation to get this done. The citizens of New Mexico and our tribal leaders expect no less.

Whether it's my colleague Mr. Pearce's bill or Senator Bingaman's bill – we need to get this to the President's desk and signed so that we can begin addressing the cleanup needs in New Mexico.

New Mexico has a long history of contributing to the national security of our nation. During World War II and the Cold War, the mining and processing of uranium was conducted in large geographical portions of New Mexico. Today, the legacy of abandoned uranium mines has negatively impacted public health, public safety and environmental health for generations of New Mexicans.

Passage of this legislation in the Senate represents a tangible opportunity to finally address this long-standing issue in my state and district, especially for Native American tribes. That is why I am urging the prompt passage of this bill in the House during the second session of the 112th Congress. Passage of this bill in the House is critical for New Mexico families and tribal communities that have been impacted by the negative effects of abandoned uranium mines for so long.

Currently, opportunities to access critical dollars for abandoned uranium mine cleanup are hard to come by. By passing this bill and giving New Mexico access to this critical funding, we have a real opportunity to create jobs cleaning up the many abandoned mines around the state, as well as, address the health and environmental impacts abandoned uranium mines have caused.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter and I look forward to working with the committee and my colleagues to pass these amendments to make sure AML funds can be used for non-coal cleanup, paving the way for New Mexico to tap into critical resources to clean up abandoned uranium mines.

Thank You