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STATE OF MONTANA

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Governor Bullock to Montana's Congressional Delegation: Fight to Preserve Funding for Abandoned Mine Lands

Helena, Mont. – Governor Steve Bullock last week sent a letter to Montana's Congressional Delegation expressing his concern about the proposal to end Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) in lieu payments to certain states and tribes, including Montana and the Crow Tribe.

"I strongly urge you to fight to preserve funding for Montana and other certified states and tribes so they can continue to create jobs, eliminate health and safety problems associated with abandoned mines, and clean up the environment," Bullock stated in the letter.

Provisions in President Obama's fiscal year 2016 proposed budget for the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) propose to end Abandoned Mine Lands in lieu payments. The funds that OSMRE distributes to Abandoned Mine Lands programs are derived from a fee on coal mined within the state or tribe's boundaries. Termination of these funds would remove well over \$5 million in direct annual spending from Montana's economy, primarily in the form of high paying construction and engineering jobs, preventing the Montana and Crow Abandoned Mine Lands Programs from addressing a host of coal-related issues.

The State of Montana has over 6,700 known abandoned mine and mill sites across the state. Montana's abandoned mine lands programs have successfully reclaimed many of the abandoned sites, but many remain unaddressed due to lack of funding and often continue to pose a threat to human health and the environment. Montana's abandoned mine lands programs currently spend over 80% of federal grants on coal-related projects. If the provisions are passed, Montana and Crow coal producers would face increased taxes on coal mined, but none of that money would return to Montana and Tribal economies through the reclamation of abandoned mines.

Bullock concluded the letter noting that, "the AML programs have worked diligently to eliminate public health and safety hazards, restore our land and water and create jobs. I hope you will safeguard this valuable program for the good of all Montanans."

For more information about the Abandoned Mine Lands Program, contact the Department of Environmental Quality at (406) 444-2544.

A copy of Bullock's letter can be found [here](#).

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