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*Law Center*



**PRESS RELEASE: \$1 BILLION RECLAIM ACT PASSES HOUSE COMMITTEE ON BIPARTISAN VOTE**

Media Contact: Eric Dixon at 865-202-8688 ([eric@aclc.org](mailto:eric@aclc.org))

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WHITESBURG, KY — After reintroduction earlier this month, the bipartisan RECLAIM Act was debated and voted on during today's House Natural Resources Committee markup, where the bill was passed out of committee on a bipartisan basis.

The RECLAIM Act would invest \$1 billion in projects that clean up abandoned coal mines and waters polluted by them, and would catalyze community development projects on or near reclaimed sites.

Support for the bill is rooted in communities struggling with abandoned mines and the decline of coal jobs, including in east Kentucky where people have been calling for the initiative since 2013. The re-introduction of the House bill earlier this month and today's passage in Committee underline the serious momentum the bill has garnered in recent weeks.

*"Being from a family whose men have worked in the coal industry for generations, this bill is of great importance to me. It's a way to stimulate the economies of the communities hit hardest by the decline of the coal industry. These communities need help now. RECLAIM will provide it by putting miners back to work reclaiming the land and creating new businesses," said Sarah Bowling, who grew up in Pike County and has been a longtime proponent of RECLAIM.*

*"Supporters in coal-impacted communities and across the country have provided 10,000 petition signatures, thousands of calls, hundreds of postcards, and local governments have passed more than 50 resolutions, all urging Congress to pass this bill," said Wes Addington, Executive Director of Appalachian Citizens' Law Center.*

The Act, if passed, would provide an immediate economic boost by employing thousands of people in reclamation jobs across the country. Many people in Central Appalachia possess the earth-moving skills necessary for this type of reclamation work,

including laid-off coal miners and others.

*Fred Jackson, the president of a reclamation contractor based in Clay County said, "If you've got more work going on, then you've got to have more workers to do them. If you've got 20 million extra dollars coming into the state, the reclamation contractors are here and will be needing extra workers for those cleanup jobs. People here value their homes like everyone else does. Home is home. Abandoned mines are affecting people's livelihoods like people's houses or people's access to the community. It would be a good thing to get more money stirring in this area and do the reclamation that needs to be done."*

RECLAIM's re-introduction earlier this month followed a March 28th House Energy and Mineral Resources subcommittee hearing at which ACLC's Senior Coordinator of Policy and Community Engagement Eric Dixon and two other witnesses [testified](#) in support of RECLAIM. After today's passage in Committee, the next step of the legislation is a vote before the full House of Representatives.

We thank Congressman Cartwright, Congressman Rogers, Congressman Beyer, Congressman Thompson, and other legislators who have sponsored the legislation or voted in favor of the bill in committee today. ACLC joins more than 20 local and national organizations across the country who have endorsed the legislation.

The RECLAIM Act could be a first step toward a more diverse, sustainable economy in the mountains, though other issues remain. Congress must ensure coal companies pay their fair share to compensate miners with black lung and clean up the huge abandoned mine problem that will remain even if RECLAIM passes. Congress should pass RECLAIM immediately, and should also extend the black lung tax slashed on January 1, 2019 and reauthorize the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) program.