

***Statement of Congressman Harry Teague at legislative hearing for H.R. 4817
The House Natural Resources Committee, Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
9/23/2010***

Thank you Chairman Rahall, Chairman Costa, and members of the committee for holding this important hearing on H.R. 4817, legislation to make Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, or SMCRA, funding eligible for the remediation of old uranium mines and mills in New Mexico and other states. I was proud to introduce this bill with Senator Jeff Bingaman and my New Mexico House colleagues, Congressmen Lujan and Heinrich, both members of this committee.

As you know, Department of Interior regulations affected after passage of the 2006 amendments to SMCRA currently restrict New Mexico from using the SMCRA funding for uranium site clean-up. According to current interpretation of the law, SMCRA is only available for coal site clean-up in New Mexico.

New Mexico disagrees with this interpretation and would like to use the SMCRA funds for uranium clean up, which is a bigger need in our state. Despite the efforts of our delegation, the Department of Interior has refused to allow for more flexibility in the use of SMCRA funds for states that aren't certified as having completed coal site cleanup.

Here are the facts about my bill.

- New Mexico currently has \$14.5 million in SMCRA funds available
- 137 uranium sites in New Mexico need remediation
- The cleanup of the sites would create on-average 10 jobs per site.

This is a common-sense, win-win bill for my state of New Mexico. We address the legacy of contamination at sites around New Mexico. And we create over 1,000 good jobs in rural New Mexico doing it.

Passing H.R. 4817 will help people in New Mexico, in Cibola County and McKinley County and across the state. That's why I'm proud to join with the delegation bring this bill forward: It's the right thing to do for the people we represent.

My bill is supported by the New Mexico State Legislature, the New Mexico Mining Association, the City of Grants, the McKinley County Chamber of Commerce, the Association of Commerce and Industry, the Village of Milan, and McKinley County, among many others.

I also look forward to hearing the testimony of my friend Governor Antonio of the Laguna Pueblo.

I thank the committee for their attention and urge them to bring this legislation to the House floor for a vote as soon as possible.