

Senator Manchin's Work on Securing Miners' Pensions and Health Care

113th Congress

March 2013: Senator Manchin joins Senators Rockefeller, Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), and Sherrod Brown (D-OH) in introducing legislation that would protect the promised lifetime pension and health care benefits for thousands of retired miners and their families

July 2014: Senator Manchin submits a statement expressing support for Miners' Black Lung Benefits to the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee Hearing

114th Congress

July 2015: Senator Manchin introduces the Miners Protection Act alongside Senator's Capito (R-WV), Brown (D-OH), and Casey (D-PA). The bill would ensure the federal government and coal operators honor their obligations of lifetime pension and health benefits to retired miners and their families.

September 2015: Senator Manchin and four other members of the Senate introduce the Black Lung Benefits Improvement Act of 2015 in an effort to overhaul the Black Lung Benefits Program to make it easier for those affected to qualify for benefits. A companion bill was filed in the House of Representatives.

May 2016: Senator Manchin along with 28 colleagues send a letter to Leader McConnell calling for action on the Miners Protection Act before the summer recess.

June 2016: Senator Manchin secures a commitment for a vote on Miner's Protection Act from Senate Democratic leadership and Senate Finance Committee Chair Orin Hatch (R-UT).

September 2016: Senator Manchin's Miners Protection Act passes out of the Senate Finance Committee favorably with bipartisan support.

November 2016: Senator Manchin leads a bipartisan letter with 21 of his colleagues to Senate and House leadership calling for passage of the Miners Protection Act by the end of the year, before 22,600 miners and their dependents would lose their healthcare benefits.

December 2016: Senator Manchin leads the effort to keep Congress in session to prevent 22,600 miners and their dependents from losing their healthcare benefits at the end of the year. He secures a 4 month extension of healthcare benefits and a commitment for a vote on a permanent fix in the coming months.

115th Congress

January 2017: Senator Manchin reintroduces the Miners Protection Act alongside Senator's Capito (R-WV), Warner (D-VA), Brown (D-OH), Heitkamp (D-ND), Casey (D-PA), McCaskill (D-MO), Portman (R-OR), Kaine (D-VA), Donnelly (D-IN). Consistent with previous

iterations, this bill would ensure the federal government and coal operators honor their obligations of lifetime pension and health benefits to retired miners and their families.

March 2017: As coal miners and their families again start receiving healthcare benefit termination notices, Senator Manchin leads an effort to urge the Senate Finance Committee to take action on Miners Protection Act before moving the nomination of Robert Lighthizer to be United States Trade Representative.

April 2017: Senator Manchin and the UMWA President lead a bipartisan effort urging House and Senate Leadership to include a permanent fix to miners' health benefits and the pension crisis in Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) funding bill.

May 2017: Senator Manchin secures lifetime healthcare benefits for 22,600 miners and their widows and children in the FY17 omnibus spending bill. The bill required the federal government and coal operators to honor their commitments to their workers and ensured that these miners and their families would never again receive a healthcare termination notice.

May 2017: Senator Manchin introduces the Miners Pension Protection Act along with 6 of his colleagues to amend the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 to transfer funds in excess of amounts needed to meet obligations under the Abandoned Mine Land fund to the 1974 UMWA Pension Plan.

October 2017: Senator Manchin introduces the bipartisan American Miners Pension Act that would protect the pensions of nearly 87,000 current beneficiaries and another 20,000 eligible coal miners with vested pensions.

October 2017: Senator Manchin introduces the Prioritizing Our Workers Act (POWA) to reform federal bankruptcy regulations and ensure that companies that file for bankruptcy keep their promises to workers.

February 2018: Senator Manchin asks the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation (PBGC) for more information about the current status of the Multiemployer Program and the dangers posed by the pending insolvencies of plans like the UMWA Pension Fund.

February 2018: Senator Manchin votes in favor of the Bipartisan Budget Agreement that establishes the bipartisan, bicameral Joint Select Committee on the Solvency of Multiemployer Pension Plans tasked with finding a path forward to solve the pension crisis.

February 2018: Senator Manchin is appointed to the bipartisan, bicameral Joint Select Committee on the Solvency of Multiemployer Pension Plans tasked with solving the pension crisis that is threatening more than 87,000 coal miners nationwide, including nearly 27,000 in West Virginia.

May 2018: Senator Manchin releases a report outlining the crisis facing the pension program for our miners.

July 2018: Senator Manchin calls for action on the pending insolvency of the UMWA 1974 Pension Plan at a field hearing in Ohio for the Select Committee on the Solvency of Multiemployer Pension Plans where he was joined by the UMWA.

December 2018: Senator Manchin sends a letter to Congressional Leadership urging the inclusion of critical miner's priorities in the end-of-year spending package. Specifically, he requested the addition of orphan miners from the 2018 bankruptcies into the Coal Act, a permanent fix to ensure the UMWA 1974 Pension Plan remains solvent, and an extension of the coal excise tax at current levels to maintain support for the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund.

116th Congress

January 2019: Senator Manchin introduces the American Miners Act (S. 27) along with Senators Kaine (D-VA), Warner (D-VA), Brown (D-OH), Jones (D-AL), and Casey (D-PA). This bill would address the insolvency of the 1974 UMWA Pension Fund and prevent its collapse while securing pensions for over 92,000 miners and their families. It would also protect healthcare benefits for 15,000 miners and their dependents and restore the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund contribution rate.

April 2019: Senator Manchin sends a letter to Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and Ranking Member Ron Wyden (D-OR) urging them to include American Miners Act provisions in the Tax Extenders package that the Finance Committee is drafting.

May 2019: Senator Manchin re-introduces the Prioritizing Our Workers Act, which would require companies going through bankruptcy proceedings to pay unpaid vested benefits, like pensions, before they pay out other claims.

May 2019: Senator Manchin, alongside colleagues from both sides of the aisle and both chambers of Congress, holds a press conference alongside the United Mine Workers of America calling for action to secure the pensions of American miners.

June 2019: Senator Manchin reads a letter from a West Virginian who relies on his pension to live in retirement and support his family.

June 2019: During Senate consideration of the National Defense Authorization Act, one of Congress' yearly "must-pass" bills, Senator Manchin offered the American Miners Act as an amendment. Unfortunately, despite securing unanimous support from the Democratic caucus, the Senate was not given an opportunity to vote on this amendment.

July 2019: 1,200 miners receive notice that they will lose their healthcare at the end of the year. Senators Manchin Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Bob Casey (D-PA) and Tim

Kaine (D-VA) took to the Senate Floor and called for Congress to pass the American Miners Act.

July 2019: Senator Manchin along with 30 Senators reintroduce the Butch-Lewis Act to address the pension crisis by creating a loan program to allow failing pension plans to borrow the money they need to put plans back on solid ground and ensure they can meet their commitments to retirees and workers.

July 2019: Senator Manchin, along with Senators Bob Casey (D-PA), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Tim Kaine (D-VA), and Mark Warner (D-VA) reintroduce the Black Lung Benefits Improvement Act of 2019, which expands coal miners' access to the Black Lung Benefits program.

September 2019: During negotiations for the Continuing Resolution that would fund the government, Senators Manchin, Doug Jones (D-AL), Mark Warner (D-VA), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Bob Casey (D-PA) and Tim Kaine (D-VA) send a letter to Senate and House Leadership asking for permanent protections for miners healthcare and pensions to be included in the funding package.

October 2019: Senator Manchin was joined by Senators Mark Warner (D-VA) and Bob Casey (D-PA) on the Senate Floor to advocate for permanent protections for miners' pensions and healthcare.

October 2019: Senator Manchin introduces the Stop Looting American Pensions (SLAP) Act. The SLAP Act would change current bankruptcy laws to increase the priority of workers during bankruptcy proceedings, require companies to make minimum funding contributions towards pension plans during bankruptcy proceedings, and prohibit sales of all the debtor's assets within 60 days of filing bankruptcy.

October 2019: Senator Manchin along with 10 other Senators introduced the American Miners Act as an amendment to H.R. 3055, the Fiscal Year 2020 Appropriation Minibus. Unfortunately, despite strong support, the Senate was not given the opportunity to vote on this amendment.

November 2019: Senators Manchin, Capito (R-WV), McConnell (R-KY), Brown (D-OH) and Portman (R-OH), were joined by seven other Senators to introduce the Bipartisan American Miners Act of 2019 to protect the pensions of 92,000 miners and secure healthcare for those affected by coal company bankruptcies in 2018 and 2019, including the recently announced bankruptcy of Murray Energy.

November 2019: Senators Manchin and Capito (R-WV) took to the Senate Floor as they introduced the Bipartisan American Miners Act as an amendment to the November Continuing

Resolution. Although the Senate did not hold a vote on this amendment, it once again had strong support.

December 2019: On December 11, Senator Manchin took to the Senate Floor once again to advocate that his bill, the Bipartisan American Miners Act, be attached to the end of the year spending package. This legislation would ensure that 13,000 miners' access to healthcare and 92,000 miners' pensions are not lost. In his speech, Senator Manchin announced that he would put a hold on all legislative action making its way to the Senate Floor until he received assurances that miners' healthcare and pensions would be secured in this package.

December 2019: Senator Manchin secured a bipartisan agreement to include the Bipartisan American Miners Act in the end of year spending package. This agreement secured lifetime healthcare benefits to 13,000 miners and secured pensions for 92,000 miners who would have lost their benefits or seen their pensions gutted throughout 2020.

January 2020: Senators Manchin, Doug Jones (D-AL), Mark Warner (D-VA), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), and Bob Casey (D-PA) introduced S. 3172, the Black Lung Benefits Disability Trust Fund Solvency Act of 2020 which would extend the black lung excise tax through December 31, 2030 to ensure that coal miners suffering from the disease have access to the medical care that they desperately need. Without the revenue from this tax, the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund is at risk of future insolvency at a time when the nationwide prevalence of black lung is increasing.

February 2020: Senator Manchin was named an honorary member of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) for his relentless work over the last 5 years to secure pensions and healthcare benefits for retired miners and their widows.

April 2020: Senators Manchin, Casey (D-PA), Brown (D-OH), Kaine (D-VA) and Warner (D-VA) asked the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Secretary Eugene Scalia and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar to immediately provide clinics and the miners they serve with clear, written guidance regarding how miner's black lung benefit claims will be processed during the COVID-19 pandemic and what specific flexibilities are being instituted to ensure miners do not lose access to essential benefits and treatment through no fault of their own.

April 2020: Senator Manchin was joined by Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Bob Casey (D-PA), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Doug Jones (D-AL), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), and Mark Warner (D-VA) in calling for the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) to implement emergency standards to protect America's brave coal miners who continue to power our nation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

May 2020: Senator Manchin, Dick Durbin (D-IL), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Bob Casey (D-PA), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), and Mark Warner (D-VA) introduced the COVID-19 Mine Worker Protection Act which would require the Mine Safety & Health Administration (MSHA) to issue an Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS) within 7 days of enactment to protect our miners from COVID-19 exposure at the mines. Additionally, the bill would forbid mine operators from retaliating against miners for reporting infection control problems to their employer or any public authority.