

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader, United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader, United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader, House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

November 16, 2020

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Leader McCarthy:

We, leaders of the Black Lung Association, urge you to extend the excise tax rate that supports the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund in the 2021 spending bill.

Thousands of miners and their families depend on the modest living stipend and health benefits provided by the black lung disability trust fund. In 2019, alone, the trust fund distributed over \$165 million to miners and their families. Unfortunately, this fund is likely to remain critical for many decades to come as the rate of black lung disease has hit a 25-year high in Appalachian coal mining states. 1 in 5 veteran working coal miners in Central Appalachia now has this preventable and fatal disease, according to the CDC's National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health.

In January 2019, Congress allowed the rate of the excise tax - last extended for ten years in 2008 and which had been stable for over thirty years - to be cut in half from \$0.55 to \$0.25 per ton of surface coal and \$1.10 to \$0.55 per ton of underground coal sold. The cut in the tax came even after the 2018 Government Accountability office report highlighted that a reduction of the tax would result in the fund having a debt of over \$15 billion by 2050.

Congress restored the tax back to its historic level in last year's spending bill. We ask, again, that you extend the excise tax in the 2021 spending bill. At minimum, we urge you to consider a one-year extension. However, such a short extension does not correct the solvency crisis facing the trust fund. A ten-year extension of the tax would be appropriate based on historic precedent, would help address the long-term solvency of the fund, and put our minds at ease.

Sincerely,

National Black Lung Association
Gary Hairston, President

Vonda Robinson, Vice President
Dianna Perdue, Secretary

Black Lung Association of Southeastern Kentucky
Patty Amburgey, Secretary

East Kentucky Coalfield Association
Barry Johnson, President
Linda Adams
Jimmy Moore

Wyoming County Black Lung Association, West Virginia
Judith Riffe, Secretary-Treasurer

Boone County Black Lung Association, West Virginia
Danny Hager, President

Nicholas County Black Lung Association, West Virginia
Arvin Hanshaw, President