



**State Representative
Jack Cera**

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**Cera bill allocates kilowatt hour tax dollars for abandoned mine reclamation,
mine safety**

Proposal encourages the employment of local miners

COLUMBUS— State Rep. Jack Cera (D-Bellaire) has introduced legislation to address the reclaiming of old mine sites that may be jeopardized by a lack of available funding due to declining coal production and severance tax revenue. The legislation would also encourage the employment of coal miners who lose their jobs and help fund mine safety training.

Cera's legislation, House Bill (HB) 15, calls for allocating three percent of funds from the Kilowatt Hour Tax Receipts Fund to the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund, the Acid Mine Drainage (AMD) Abatement and Treatment Fund, and for allocating an additional .75 percent to the Mine Safety Fund.

The Bellaire lawmaker noted that Ohio is seeing coal mining on the decline for a variety of reasons. The decline is impacting the state's severance taxes, which help fund the reclaiming of old mine sites. With less coal being mined, there will also be less federal money available for the reclamation of these sites mined prior to reclamation laws taking effect.

"By allocating funds for reclamation, restoration projects and AMD problems, we can help improve land and water resources adversely affected by past pre-law coal mining practices, especially in eastern Ohio," said Cera.

Cera believes that earmarking funds from the Kilowatt Hour Tax Receipts for reclamation projects will help make up the loss of revenue at the state and federal level and continue efforts to reclaim past mining problems.

According to Cera, the Kilowatt Hour Tax was part of electric utility deregulation in 2001. The revenue from the fund currently goes to the state's General Revenue Fund.

"Considering the fact that for many years most electric generation in Ohio was from coal, it makes sense to use just a small part of this revenue to help reclaim and restore these sites," said Cera. "There are many acres in Ohio that still need reclaimed and many streams with AMD problems. This bill would add more funding to the existing federal and state money available for this use."

HB 15 requires ODNR to develop a bidding process that encourages the hiring of dislocated coal miners by companies doing the reclamation work. The bill also allocates funding to the Mine Safety Fund to help with safety training for existing coal miners and for the operation of the Mine Training Center.

“If enacted, this bill will increase funding for reclamation work and put displaced miners back to work – a win-win for addressing some of the problems we face in the coal-producing area of the state,” added Cera.

House Bill 15 will now go to a House committee for consideration.