



## H.R. 1937: THREATENING WATER RESOURCES, DISENFRANCHISING COMMUNITIES

**Masquerading as a bill about “strategic and critical minerals,” HR 1937 strips key water, health and community protections against the nation’s largest toxic polluter, the hardrock mining industry.**

The 1872 Mining Law that governs hardrock mining on public lands – mainly metals like gold, copper, silver and uranium -- already allows industry open, privileged access to public minerals:

- Multinational corporations mine publicly-owned minerals without paying the taxpayers for them.
- The Law makes mining the "highest and best use" of public lands. Federal land managers do not deny mine proposals.
- In addition hardrock mining is exempt from key provisions of federal environmental laws like the Clean Water Act



Far from being burdened by regulation the modern mining industry is still governed by the 1872 Mining Law, fathered for 19<sup>th</sup> century pickaxe & mule miners by Nevada Senator William Stewart.

HR 1937 would truncate the mine permitting process and eliminate meaningful environmental review. It threatens water resources, and limits the ability of mining-impacted communities to protect their land, water and health.

### *Mining at Any Cost*

HR 1937 allows federal agencies to exempt mining projects from NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) review. NEPA guarantees ordinary citizens can participate in the evaluation of projects that affect them, like mining proposal. This bill would severely limit the public’s role in deciding what is being done in the public’s name on public lands.

HR 1937 caps the length of the permit process to just 30 months. It also allows regulators to exempt mining projects from the Equal Access to Justice Act (EAJA). EAJA allows average Americans access to legal representation to protect their communities. Without EAJA, impacted communities too often could not afford lawyers, much less the litany of scientific and technical experts needed to mount a serious challenge to a multinational mining company.

### *A Better Way*

Disenfranchising rural communities and polluting western waters is not a solution. In addition to research on recycling and alternative, sustainable sources for metals, 1872 Mining Law reform, as in HR 963, is needed to protect some of our most precious resources. HR 1937 takes us in the wrong direction. The hardrock mining industry should be clamoring to lead the world in better mining practices, not catering to the lowest common denominator.

