



For Immediate Release
June 20, 2008

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**Governors Richardson, Kulongoski, Gregoire Call for Reform of
1872 Mining Law
Fair Compensation of Taxpayers, Adequate Environmental
Protections Needed**

(Santa Fe, NM) Today Governor Richardson along with Governors of Washington and Oregon sent a letter to the Senate Energy Committee calling for reform of the 1872 Mining Law. The 1872 Mining Law governs mining practices on federal lands today, but is a relic of frontier-era America.

“The 1872 Mining Law is a relic of frontier-era America, and inadequate to meet the needs of the modern West,” said Governor Richardson. “We need new a mining law that fairly compensates taxpayers for the use of public lands, and adequately protect our precious water and most fragile landscapes.”

-text of letter follows-

June 20, 2008

The Honorable Jeff Bingaman
United States Senate
703 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Pete Domenici
United States Senate
328 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Bingaman and Domenici:

As governors of western states, we are writing to thank you for continuing the process of reforming the 1872 Mining Law. As you know, the House has already passed strong mining

overhaul legislation, the Hardrock Mining and Reclamation Act of 2007, and the West has a vital interest in the Senate passing comparable reform and the President signing a bill this Congress.

The 1872 Mining Law made sense for the West when it was written, but that was during the administration of President Ulysses S. Grant. Fundamentally unchanged since then, the law still governs mining practices on federal lands and today it is a frontier-era relic.

We all know the law is woefully antiquated at this time. We are no longer trying to settle the west and we need to halt the practice of privatizing federal lands without fair compensation to taxpayers. Additionally, hardrock mining companies should pay royalties for these publicly owned minerals, which would restore billions of dollars to the public trust. Finally, we need to put adequate environmental protections in place to ensure mining activities no longer degrade the streams and landscapes throughout our region.

We urge you to support a Senate mining law bill that will produce the reforms needed for the 21st century. It should include a permanent end to the land patenting system, equitable royalties that will help fund future abandoned mine cleanup projects, strong environmental and reclamation standards and the ability for federal land managers to ban new mining on sensitive federal lands.

In addition, the bill should include the provision that would allow the state, county and tribal governments to petition the Secretary of the Interior to withdraw specific tracts of federal land to protect cultural resources, watersheds, wildlife or scenic vistas. It is critical that the interests of western communities whose economies rely on the protection of surrounding public land be respected by allowing them to have a voice in mining decisions that impact their fiscal and environmental health.

Thank you for your attention to this issue, and if we can be of any further assistance in advancing this important reform legislation please do not hesitate to call on us.

Sincerely,

Bill Richardson
Governor, State of New Mexico

Christine Gregoire
Governor, State of Washington

Ted Kulongoski
Governor, State of Oregon