

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 36

BY JUDICIARY, RULES AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

STATING FINDINGS OF THE LEGISLATURE AND RECOGNIZING AND THANKING THE MINING
INDUSTRY FOR ITS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF IDAHO
AND RECOGNIZING MAY 2, 2022, IN MEMORY OF THOSE WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN
THE SUNSHINE MINE DISASTER.

Be It Resolved by the Legislature of the State of Idaho:

WHEREAS, mining has been at the core of Idaho's history, and the discovery of gold ensured the Idaho Territory would be established in 1863. Almost every important metal and mineral is found in Idaho. As the gold fields were depleted, the search for other opportunities uncovered silver, lead, and zinc deposits in the Coeur d'Alene area, which became known as one of the world's richest mineral areas. Idaho is the nation's top producer of newly mined silver, producing almost 45% of the total mined in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the Coeur d'Alene mining district that encompasses Kootenai and Shoshone counties is considered one of the richest metal mining areas in the world, producing an estimated two billion dollars since 1885. The largest and richest silver mines in the United States include the Sunshine, Galena, and Bunker Hill mines, all located in Shoshone County; and

WHEREAS, On May 2, 1972, 173 men began work at 7:00 a.m. at the Sunshine silver mine, which is over a mile deep with more than 100 miles of tunnels. At about 11:40 a.m., two electricians stepped out of the electric shop that was located on the 3700 level, smelled smoke, and shouted a warning. A fire had broken out, and smoke, carbon monoxide, and other gases swept through the tunnels and shafts; and

WHEREAS, the management team and officials of the Sunshine Mining Company were attending the annual stockholders' meeting in Coeur d'Alene, about 45 miles away, leaving no designated individual in charge of the rescue operations and the remaining foremen underground and on the surface to organize the rescue operations for their own crews;

WHEREAS, 83 men survived the disaster, with 81 making it to safety on May 2 and two more rescued on May 9; and

WHEREAS, 91 miners died from smoke inhalation or carbon monoxide poisoning, making it one of the worst mining disasters in American history and the worst in Idaho's history; and

WHEREAS, the community erected a monument in honor of the lost miners near the mine site; and

WHEREAS, former Idaho Governor Philip E. Batt authored the poem, "We Were Miners Then" in 1972 that reflected the horror, sadness, solidarity, and pride in recovery that Idahoans felt in response to the Sunshine silver mine disaster that reads as follows:

"Our tongues have not tasted the bitter dust
The roar of the drills has never reached our ears.

1 Unfelt to us is the darkness of the shafts.
 2 Yet we are Idahoans
 3 and we were miners then.
 4 We are farmers
 5 We run the water from melted snows
 6 Onto parched desert soil.
 7 The planted seeds take root and grow
 8 The harvest fills our granaries.
 9 The pits are strange to us
 10 But we are Idahoans
 11 And we were miners then.
 12 We are loggers
 13 We are your neighbors
 14 We share the high country with you
 15 But we sing our song
 16 To the buzzing of the chainsaw
 17 And do our dance on the spinning logs.
 18 There's no room in the mine
 19 For our trees to fall
 20 But we are Idahoans
 21 And we were miners then.
 22 We are cattlemen, innkeepers, merchants,
 23 Men of the law and men of the cloth
 24 Ours are a thousand trades
 25 But only you go into the bowels of the
 26 Earth to do your daily chores
 27 Yet we are all Idahoans
 28 And we were miners then.
 29 Yes, we were miners;
 30 We waited in spirit at the mouth of the pit
 31 Ached in unison at the news of the dead
 32 Joined the jubilation at the rescue of the living
 33 Marveled at the poise of the tiny community.
 34 And we became strong
 35 The flux of the widows' tears welded
 36 Your strength into our bodies.
 37 And we were all Idahoans
 38 And we were all miners
 39 And we were all proud."

40 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the members of the Second Regular Ses-
 41 sion of the Sixty-sixth Idaho Legislature, the House of Representatives and
 42 the Senate concurring therein, that Idaho recognizes and thanks the mining
 43 industry for its contributions to the past, present, and future of Idaho.

44 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature recognizes May 2, 2022, in
 45 memory of those who lost their lives in the Sunshine silver mine disaster.