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KEEPING THE PROMISE TO MINERS AND WIDOWS

WHEREAS: President Harry Truman issued Executive Order 9728 on May 21, 1946, which required the Department of the Interior to take possession of all bituminous coal mines in the United States of America and the government assumed the task of negotiating and ultimately commencing “appropriate changes in the terms and conditions of employment;” and

WHEREAS: Secretary Krug negotiated the National Bituminous Wage Agreement with UMWA President John L. Lewis, which was signed in the White House with President Truman looking on; and

WHEREAS: The historic Krug-Lewis Agreement created a Welfare and Retirement Fund, which was intended to make *...payments to miners, and their dependents and survivors, with respect to wage loss not otherwise compensated at all or adequately under the provision of Federal or State law and resulting from sickness..., permanent disability, death, or retirement...;* and

WHEREAS: The agreement also created a Medical and Hospital Fund; and

WHEREAS: The following year the government returned control of the mines to the owners; and

WHEREAS: Every subsequent National Bituminous Coal Wage Agreement has required that signatory employers participate in and contribute to the Welfare and Retirement Fund and then the 1974 Pension Fund; and

WHEREAS: Mine operators also contractually agreed to provide lifetime health care and pensions for retired and disabled miners and their surviving spouses; and

WHEREAS: To achieve this end, miners for more than 70 years exchanged less in their wallets on payday to secure dignity in retirement for themselves and their surviving spouses; and

WHEREAS: Over the years as bankruptcies and other economic shocks hit the coal industry the government recognized that it needed to keep the promise of the Krug-Lewis agreement and play a role in guaranteeing retiree health care for those retirees whose companies went out of business; and

WHEREAS: The Krug-Lewis promise is, however, only half fulfilled, because

bankruptcy restructuring and dissolution has allowed coal employers that participated in the UMWA 1974 Pension Fund to end their contributions without paying any withdrawal liabilities; and

WHEREAS: The national recession of 2008-09 caused the 1974 Fund, which was properly funded, to lose a substantial portion of its value with no clear path for recovery; and

WHEREAS: A depression in the coal fields has caused tens of thousands of jobs to be eliminated, diminishing contributions to the fund at the very time the amount of retirees receiving benefits is at its peak; and

WHEREAS: Coal miners have sacrificed much to energize and build our nation; more than 200,000 coal miners have been killed on the job or died as a result of black lung in the last century; and

WHEREAS: There is a bipartisan, bicameral Joint Select Committee on Solvency of Multiemployer Pension Plans established by Congress with the task of drafting legislation that is to be reported out of the committee by the last week of November 2018; and

WHEREAS: The Joint Select Committee on Solvency of Multi-employer Pension Plans could provide the necessary financial assistance to the UMWA 1974 Pension Fund and other union pension funds, thereby preventing their collapse.

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED: That the Ohio AFL-CIO recognizes the needs of our nation's coal miners.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: The Ohio AFL-CIO and its affiliates pledge our support to our brothers and sisters in the United Mine Workers of America to obtain their well-deserved pensions.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED: The Ohio AFL-CIO and its affiliates will take all necessary steps to aid in the production of legislation from the Joint Select Committee on Solvency of Multiemployer Pension Plans so that the collapse of the UMWA 1974 Pension Fund is prevented.

Submitted by: The United Mine Workers of America