

One Hundred Sixth Congress of the United States of America

AT THE SECOND SESSION

*Begun and held at the City of Washington on Monday,
the twenty-fourth day of January, two thousand*

An Act

To amend the Mineral Leasing Act to increase the maximum acreage of Federal leases for sodium that may be held by an entity in any one State, and for other purposes.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of
the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds and declares that—

(1) The Federal lands contain commercial deposits of trona, with the world's largest body of this mineral located on such lands in southwestern Wyoming.

(2) Trona is mined on Federal lands through Federal sodium leases issued under the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920.

(3) The primary product of trona mining is soda ash (sodium carbonate), a basic industrial chemical that is used for glass making and a variety of consumer products, including baking soda, detergents, and pharmaceuticals.

(4) The Mineral Leasing Act sets for each leasable mineral limitations on the amount of acreage of Federal leases any one producer may hold in any one State or nationally.

(5) The present acreage limitation for Federal sodium (trona) leases has been in place for over five decades, since 1948, and is the oldest acreage limitation in the Mineral Leasing Act. Over this time frame Congress and/or the BLM has revised acreage limits for other minerals to meet the needs of the respective industries. Currently, the sodium lease acreage limitation of 15,360 acres per State is approximately one-third of the per State Federal lease acreage cap for coal (46,080 acres) and potassium (51,200 acres) and one-sixteenth that of oil and gas (246,080 acres).

(6) Three of the four trona producers in Wyoming are operating mines on Federal leaseholds that contain total acreage close to the sodium lease acreage ceiling.

(7) The same reasons that Congress cited in enacting increases in other minerals' per State lease acreage caps apply to trona: the advent of modern mine technology, changes in industry economics, greater global competition, and need to conserve the Federal resource.

(8) Existing trona mines require additional lease acreage to avoid premature closure, and are unable to relinquish mined-out areas to lease new acreage because those areas continue to be used for mine access, ventilation, and tailings disposal and may provide future opportunities for secondary recovery by solution mining.

H. R. 3063—2

(9) Existing trona producers are having to make long term business decisions affecting the type and amount of additional infrastructure investments based on the certainty that sufficient acreage of leaseable trona will be available for mining in the future.

(10) To maintain the vitality of the domestic trona industry and ensure the continued flow of valuable revenues to the Federal and State governments and products to the American public from trona production on Federal lands, the Mineral Leasing Act should be amended to increase the acreage limitation for Federal sodium leases.

SEC. 2. AMENDMENT OF MINERAL LEASING ACT.

Paragraph (2) of subsection (b) of section 27 of the Mineral Leasing Act (41 Stat. 448; 30 U.S.C. 184(b)(2)) is amended by striking “fifteen thousand three hundred and sixty acres” and inserting “30,720 acres”.

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

*Vice President of the United States and
President of the Senate.*