

of the Miners Protection Act with me, and I am proud to say that the healthcare portion of that bill is included in the Omnibus appropriations bill that we are set to vote on later this week. Before sending this permanent fix to the President's desk for his signature, I want to confirm our specific understanding of how the language would apply to the eligibility for benefits of the former employees of Patriot Coal, Alpha Natural Resources, and Walter Energy.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I certainly appreciate the kind comments from my friend and fellow Senator from West Virginia, Mr. MANCHIN, who has been a champion of this issue. It has been a pleasure to work together and to have it all work out. We have worked closely together for the past several years to advance a permanent solution for the retirement benefits of thousands of miners in our State and across the Nation. I appreciate Senator MANCHIN's hard work and leadership on this; I really do.

I would be happy to discuss what I believe is our shared understanding of the intent behind miners' healthcare language in the omnibus bill that originated in the Miners Protection Act.

Mr. MANCHIN. The language states that anyone who would have received retiree healthcare coverage from one of these three companies, but for the orders entered in their bankruptcy proceedings terminating the employer's obligations to provide these benefits, becomes a participant in the UMW 1993 Benefit Plan.

I understand that the language encompasses anyone who would have received such coverage from the bankrupt employers and not just those who meet the 1993 plan's general eligibility requirements. This includes miners or widows who might have been specifically bargained into the plan, such as the miners who worked at the ill-fated Upper Big Branch Mine. We all know the drastic situation of those great miners.

Also included are miners who do not meet the 1993 plan's general eligibility requirements because their employers rejected their collectively bargained obligations and withdrew from the UMW 1974 Pension Plan but who would have become eligible if their service for the bankrupt employer or its successor were included in determining their eligibility.

Mrs. CAPITO. I wholly share Senator MANCHIN's understanding of this key provision of the legislation.

By adopting the language from the Miners Protection Act that is included in the Omnibus appropriations bill, we intended to cover any miners, survivors, and dependents who would have received or continued to receive Federal retiree healthcare benefits from one of these bankrupt employers had it not gone through the bankruptcy process, without regard to the 1993 plan's usual eligibility rules.

I understand that these individuals are eligible under the rules as applied

by the Patriot VEBA, and I expect that these rules will continue to be applied in the same manner by the 1993 plan.

Mr. MANCHIN. Let me say that both of us representing the great State of West Virginia from both sides of the aisle—a main purpose has been protecting the people who did all the heavy lifting in this great country and gave us the energy we needed to be the superpower of the world.

I know that Senator CAPITO is as proud as I am. I am proud to be working with her to make this happen. This is truly a bipartisan effort. It is the way legislation used to be done, and it is the way it should be done, and hopefully we can start something anew here. I thank my colleague.

Mrs. CAPITO. There is nothing like seeing the faces of our miners as we did in our offices the other day and I have seen in my office throughout this time—or when it was at the 100-degree rally out on the lawn last fall—to realize the human faces behind what we are talking about.

Senator MANCHIN is right. It is a bipartisan issue, and it is the right and fair thing to do.

It has been a pleasure to work with Senator MANCHIN and with the UMW and our other colleagues to see this legislation through.

Mr. MANCHIN. I think we have both been able to educate not only our fellow colleagues, our Senators, but basically the entire country on the hard work the miners have done and what they have provided for this country for us to be the superpower of the world—to respect the work they have done and continue to do.

With that, I am so proud of everybody who worked so diligently on this issue and this effort, for the Republicans, our President, and our leaders on both sides, Democratic and Republican, making sure this was first and foremost the main obligation for us to accomplish. I thank my colleagues.

Mrs. CAPITO. I thank my colleagues.

Mr. MANCHIN. With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

All time has expired.

The joint resolution was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The joint resolution having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the joint resolution pass?

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TILLIS). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 49, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 120 Leg.]

YEAS—50

Alexander	Flake	Paul
Barrasso	Gardner	Perdue
Blunt	Graham	Portman
Boozman	Grassley	Risch
Burr	Hatch	Roberts
Capito	Heller	Rounds
Cassidy	Hoeven	Rubio
Cochran	Inhofe	Sasse
Collins	Isakson	Scott
Cornyn	Johnson	Shelby
Cotton	Kennedy	Strange
Crapo	Lankford	Sullivan
Cruz	Lee	Thune
Daines	McCain	Tillis
Enzi	McConnell	Toomey
Ernst	Moran	Wicker
Fischer	Murkowski	

NAYS—49

Baldwin	Harris	Peters
Bennet	Hassan	Reed
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Sanders
Booker	Heitkamp	Schatz
Brown	Hirono	Schumer
Cantwell	Kaine	Shaheen
Cardin	King	Stabenow
Carper	Klobuchar	Tester
Casey	Leahy	Udall
Coons	Manchin	Van Hollen
Corker	Markey	Warner
Cortez Masto	McCaskill	Warren
Donnelly	Menendez	Whitehouse
Duckworth	Merkley	Wyden
Feinstein	Murphy	Young
Franken	Murray	
Gillibrand	Nelson	

NOT VOTING—1

Durbin

The joint resolution (H.J. Res. 66) was passed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

HIRE VETS ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask the Chair to lay before the body the message to accompany H.R. 244.

The Presiding Officer laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

Resolved, That the House agree to the amendments numbered 2 and 3 of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 244) entitled "An Act to encourage effective, voluntary investments to recruit, employ, and retain men and women who have served in the United States military with annual Federal awards to employers recognizing such efforts, and for other purposes," and be it further

Resolved, That the House agree to the amendment numbered 1 of the Senate to the aforementioned bill, with an amendment.

MOTION TO CONCUR

Mr. MCCONNELL. I move to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 244.

CLOTURE MOTION

I send a cloture motion to the desk on the motion to concur.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented

under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 244, an act to encourage effective, voluntary investments to recruit, employ, and retain men and women who have served in the United States military with annual Federal awards to employers recognizing such efforts, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, Thad Cochran, Orrin G. Hatch, Bill Cassidy, Tom Cotton, Lamar Alexander, John Barrasso, John Thune, Mike Rounds, Susan M. Collins, Lisa Murkowski, John Cornyn, Richard C. Shelby, Thom Tillis, Jerry Moran, Roger F. Wicker, Shelley Moore Capito.

MOTION TO CONCUR WITH AMENDMENT NO. 210

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 244, with a further amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. MCCONNELL] moves to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 244, with an amendment numbered 210.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

At the end add the following:

"This Act shall take effect 1 day after the date of enactment."

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask for the yeas and nays on the motion to concur with amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 211 TO AMENDMENT NO. 210

Mr. MCCONNELL. I have a second-degree amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. MCCONNELL] proposes an amendment numbered 211 to amendment No. 210.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

Strike "1 day" and insert "2 days".

MOTION TO REFER WITH AMENDMENT NO. 212

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to refer the House message on H.R. 244 to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions with instructions to report back forthwith with an amendment numbered 212.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. MCCONNELL] moves to refer the message to accompany H.R. 244 to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions with instructions to report back forthwith with an amendment numbered 212.

The amendment is as follows:

At the end add the following:

"This act shall be effective 3 days after enactment."

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask for the yeas and nays on my motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 213

Mr. MCCONNELL. I have an amendment to the instructions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. MCCONNELL] proposes an amendment numbered 213 to the instructions of the motion to refer the message to accompany H.R. 244.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

Strike "3 days" and insert "4 days".

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask for the yeas and nays on my amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 214 TO AMENDMENT NO. 213

Mr. MCCONNELL. I have a second-degree amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. MCCONNELL] proposes an amendment numbered 214 to amendment No. 213.

The amendment is as follows:

Strike "4" and insert "5".

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, for the information of all Senators, the Omnibus appropriations bill is now pending. I filed cloture to ensure that the Senate can pass it and send it to the President for his signature before the end of the week. It is my hope that we can enter into an agreement to vote on the omnibus tomorrow rather than running out the clock into the weekend.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following leader remarks on Monday, May 8, the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of Calendar No. 38, the nomination of Heather Wilson to be Secretary of the Air Force. I further ask that there be 4 hours of debate on the nomination, equally divided in the usual form; and that following the use or yielding back

of time, the Senate vote on confirmation of the nomination; and that, if confirmed, the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO GARY RANSDALL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today I wish to celebrate the retirement of my friend, Dr. Gary A. Ransdell, who, since September 12, 1997, has served as the ninth president of Western Kentucky University.

During his nearly two decades leading WKU, Gary has overseen a complete transformation of the school. An alumnus of the school himself, graduating in 1973 with a bachelor of arts degree in mass communications and again in 1974 with a master of public service degree in public administration, Gary said that "[s]erving my alma mater has been a dream come true."

Under Gary's leadership, the school has grown into a prominent university with an international presence. Since 1997, enrollment has increased from 14,500 to 21,000, with strong improvements in graduation numbers, the number of applicants, and student retention. WKU has attracted hundreds of millions of dollars in private donations, completing two major capital campaigns under Gary's guidance. Those funds have revitalized the campus and created state of the art buildings and classrooms.

Students at WKU have a world of education within their reach. New undergraduate degree programs focusing on mechanical, electrical, and civil engineering and doctoral degree programs in education, nursing, physical therapy, and psychology promote research and prepare students for their careers. The university is also committed to transferring its technology into the Kentucky workplace to help develop the State's economy. WKU's regional campuses throughout Western Kentucky make education accessible to many Kentuckians for the first time. The creation of the Gatton Academy of Math and Science, which reached a milestone in 2014 when the school was ranked as the No. 1 high school in America for its 3rd year in a row by Newsweek, has helped Kentucky students blossom into scholars and future leaders.

During Gary's time at WKU, the school successfully transitioned into Conference USA and, in the 2014-2015 school year, set a record with eight conference championships. The WKU