Prospects for change

NMA President Quinn encouraged by Trump’s resource development policies

A fter eight years of battling anti-mining policies being promulgated by the Obama Administration, the National Mining Association is cautiously optimistic about the positive change in the tone and substance of U.S. resource development policies since Donald Trump has moved into the White House.

“The November election ushered in a surprisingly swift and dramatic change, particularly in the way people in Washington D.C. view natural resources,” NMA President and CEO Hal Quinn said during a June 28 keynote speech at the Resource Development Council for Alaska annual membership luncheon in Anchorage.

The leader of the United States’ top mining advocacy group said the about face in the tone and substance emanating from the White House when it comes to mining policies extends to the nation’s resource sectors at large.

“For all resource industries things are changing and with the new administration there is a return of government that encourages responsible development and the use of all our natural resources,” Quinn told the Alaska resource community at the sold-out luncheon.

Unmistakable change

Quinn said there is no clearer sign of the dramatic change in this tone than seeing miners flank President Trump as he signs a resolution that overturns a midnight hour Obama administration rule that threatened U.S. coal miners with added regulatory burden.

This so-called Stream Protection Rule was touted by the Obama administration as a necessary clarification of the regulations surrounding valley fill, a mining technique used in Appalachia that involves depositing overburden removed from hilltops in an adjacent valley and then re-contouring the landscape after mining is complete.

U.S. coal producers, had argued that this “one-size-fits-all” regulation attempts to address concerns in the eastern U.S. and apply them across the country, an approach that does not work for an area as unique as Alaska.

Less than a month after being sworn into office, Trump signed H.J. Resolution 38, which overturns what he called “another terrible job-killing rule.”

“Compliance costs for this rule would be over $50 million a year for the coal industry alone, and it’s unnecessary,” the President told the legislators and coal miners gathered to witness the signing.

“Do you recall something close to this happening in the last eight years?” Quinn asked the Alaska resource development community gathered in Anchorage, referring to the miners in attendance.

The NMA President said American miners have also been invited as guests of honor to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Headquarters; while Quinn anticipated that the Trump Administration would bring positive change for mining in the U.S., he said he never thought he would witness a U.S. Labor Secretary stroll through the front doors of the NMA office in Washington D.C. and introduce himself.

Not only did Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta make a courtesy visit, but took the time to sit down with mining safety leaders meeting that day at the NMA office.

Trump’s signing of the energy independence executive order; and Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke’s trip to Alaska as part of his department’s “focus on energy independence and energy dominance,” are other indi-

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President Donald Trump holds up H.J. Res. 38, which overturns the so-called Stream Protection Rule, an Obama-era regulation that placed tougher restrictions on coal mines in the U.S.