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On January 13, the House passed H.R. 1644, legislation blocking the implementation of the controversial Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement's (OSMRE) Stream Protection Rule.

The Stream Protection Rule, proposed last year by OSMRE, required the department to update their 30-year-old regulations governing coal mining to reflect the "current best available science and technology." The rule mandated a clear definition of material damages to streams from coal mines and required permits to identify how mining-related activities impacted ground and surface water quality. In addition, the rule required coal mine operators to collect environmental data about sites prior to mining in order to establish a baseline for evaluating environmental impacts.

While lawmakers with ties to the coal industry and mining groups opposed to the rule praise the legislation, environmental groups criticize it. The White House has threatened to veto the bill, claiming that it inhibits OSMRE and the proposed rule from strengthening water monitoring requirements and gathering environmental information.

Update: The President vetoed the legislation on January 21, 2016.

Sources: E&E News, Congress.gov, U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO)

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