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Senator Tom Udall (D-NM) and other Democratic senators introduced legislation requiring mining companies to pay royalties for abandoned hardrock mine cleanup efforts. The bill (S. 2254), known as the Hardrock Mining and Reclamation Act of 2015, directs the Department of the Interior to set 2 to 5 percent royalty rates for new hardrock mines.

The bill would also add on fees to new and existing mines to help reclaim abandoned mine sites; the fees would be funneled into a Hardrock Minerals Reclamation Fund managed by the Department of the Interior. The bill also includes multiple changes to mining legislation such as, requiring annual maintenance fees to retain mining claims and invoking a faster review process for proposed projects that may cause negative environmental impacts.

Under this legislation, communities would be able to petition the federal government to make areas off limits for mining. S. 2254 has been read twice and referred to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Sources: E&E NEWS, Library of Congress
