

Department of Legislative Services  
 Maryland General Assembly  
 2015 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 723 (Delegate A. Washington)  
 Ways and Means

Maryland-Mined Coal Tax Credit - Repeal

This bill accelerates the termination date for the Maryland-mined coal tax credit from tax year 2021 to 2015.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2015.

Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** General fund revenues increase by \$3.0 million annually beginning in FY 2016, reflecting the maximum annual amount of credits that can be claimed under current law. Accelerating the termination date increases State revenues by a total of \$18.0 million through FY 2021.

(\$ in millions)	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
GF Revenue	\$3.0	\$3.0	\$3.0	\$3.0	\$3.0
Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0
Net Effect	\$3.0	\$3.0	\$3.0	\$3.0	\$3.0

*Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate effect*

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

Analysis

**Current Law:** Public service companies in Maryland can claim a \$3 per ton credit for the amount of Maryland-mined coal purchased in a calendar year. This nonrefundable tax credit can be claimed against the public service company franchise tax and cannot exceed

the State tax liability for that tax year. Certain co-generators and electricity suppliers that are not subject to the public service company franchise tax can also claim a \$3 per ton credit for the amount of Maryland-mined coal purchased in a calendar year. This nonrefundable credit can be claimed against the State income tax.

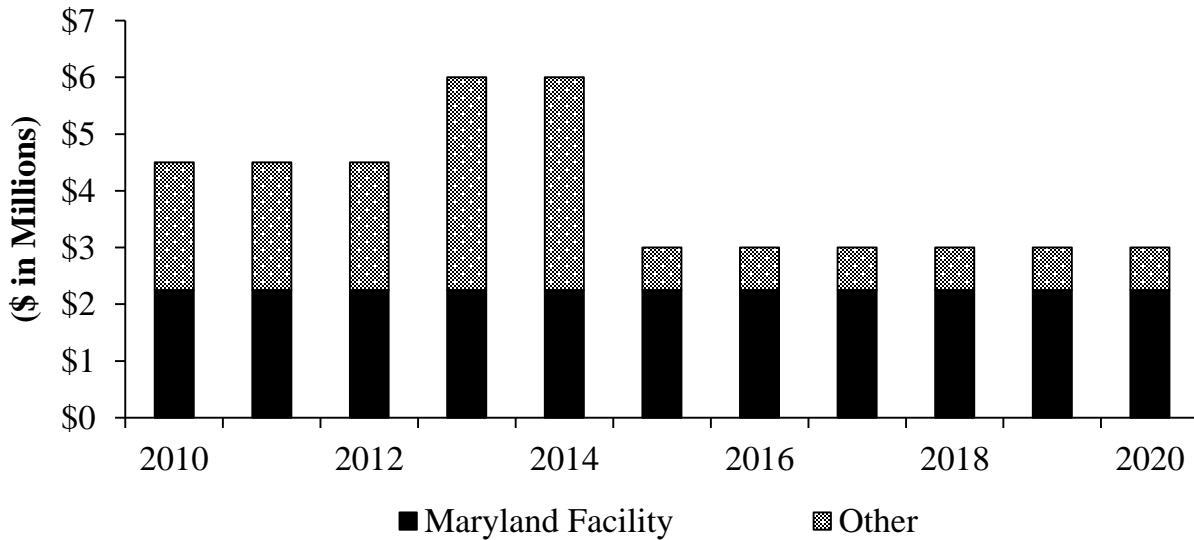
**Background:** Maryland public service companies and specified co-generators and electricity suppliers can claim a \$3 per ton credit for the amount of Maryland-mined coal purchased in a calendar year. Chapter 247 of 2006 capped the maximum annual amount of credits that can be claimed in tax year 2007 through 2020, and terminated the credit beginning in tax year 2021. The Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2009 (Chapter 487) reduced these amounts in tax years 2009 through 2012; the maximum that can currently be claimed is \$3.0 million annually in tax years 2015 through 2020.

Chapter 792 of 1988 established the tax credit for Maryland-mined coal purchased by public service companies, with a sunset provision of June 30, 1991. Subsequent legislation expanded and extended the credit, including Chapter 700 of 2000. Chapter 700 was not approved by the Attorney General's Office for constitutionality and legal sufficiency, in that it was determined that a court is likely to have serious problems with the credit under the Commerce Clause of the U.S. Constitution.

The Attorney General ruled in 1995 that consumption was not a requirement for claiming the credit. As a result, a company that claims the credit can act as a broker, purchasing Maryland-mined coal and selling it to out-of-state companies who consume the coal since the end users are not subject to the public service company franchise tax. The State Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT) is required to reserve \$2,250,000 of the annual credits for purchases of Maryland-mined coal that will actually be used in a Maryland facility. **Exhibit 1** shows the total amount of credits that SDAT may award in each calendar year, including the amount that must be reserved for purchases of coal that will be used in a Maryland facility.

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**Exhibit 1**  
**Maximum Coal Credits Allowable**  
**Tax Year 2010-2020**



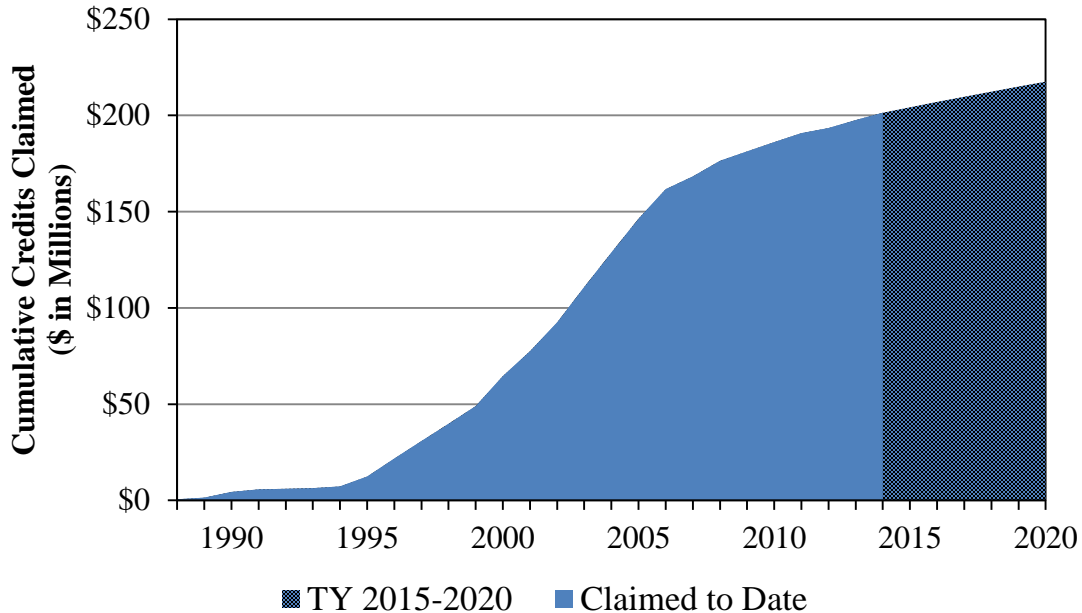
Source: State Department of Assessments and Taxation; Department of Legislative Services

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In tax years 2012 through 2014, the total amount of credits claimed each year was less than the maximum amount of credits authorized, totaling \$2.6 million in tax year 2012, \$4.1 million in tax year 2013, and \$3.9 million in tax year 2014. Under the program, a total of \$201.4 million in public service company franchise tax credits have been claimed through tax year 2014. About two-thirds of this total was claimed in the eight tax years before 2009, when the maximum cap of \$4.5 million took effect. Through the termination of the credit a total of \$217.6 million in public service company franchise tax credits will be claimed, plus an additional amount of unknown credits against the corporate income tax. **Exhibit 2** shows the cumulative amount of credits claimed against the public service company franchise tax.

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**Exhibit 2**  
**Cumulative Credits Claimed**  
**Tax Year 1987-2020**



Note: Credits are in constant 2013 dollars and do not include additional amounts claimed against the corporate income tax.

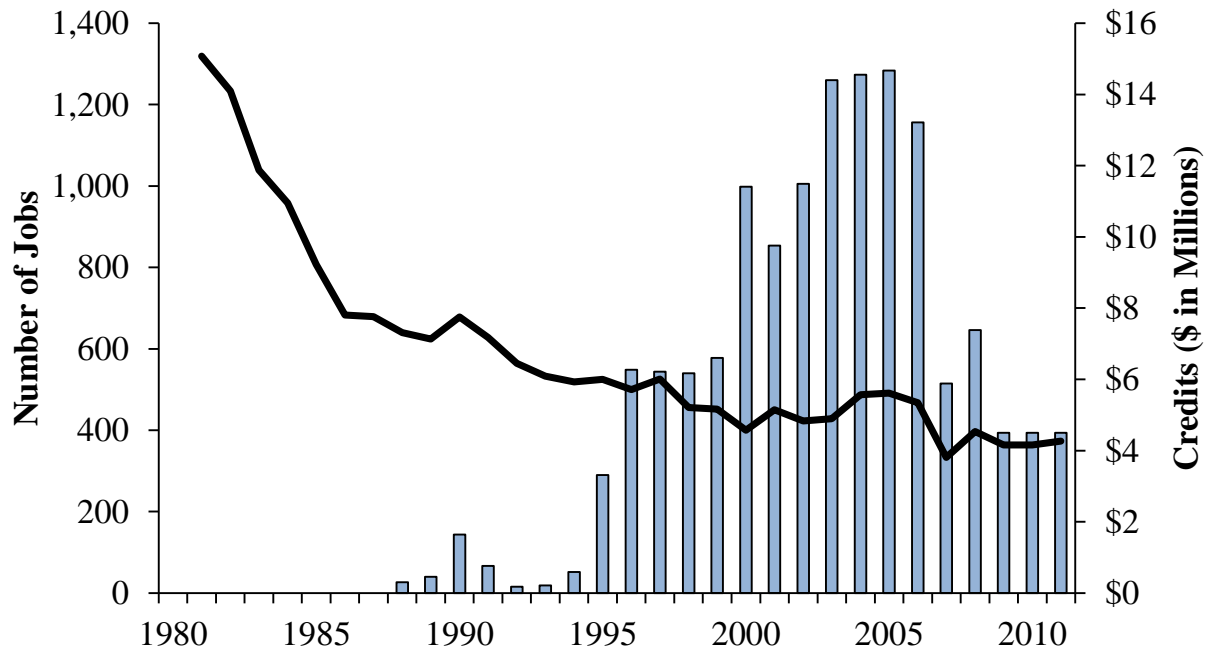
Source: State Department of Assessments and Taxation; Department of Legislative Services

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According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, a little under 600 workers are employed in the natural resources and mining industry (which includes other industries such as timber) in Garrett County and Allegany County, comprising 4.0% and 0.4% of total county employment, respectively. The Maryland Bureau of Mines reports that a total of 373 coal miners were employed in Garrett and Allegany counties during 2011. This number does not include office workers, supervisors, or independent coal truck haulers. Employment has decreased significantly since reaching a peak of 1,300 in 1981, largely reflecting technology gains that have boosted worker productivity. **Exhibit 3** shows the number of coal miners employed in these counties since 1981, and the amount of credits claimed in each year.

Coal production and employment recently decreased after large-scale mining of the Freeport coal seam terminated in 2006. Since then, coal production and employment has stabilized despite the decrease in tax credits awarded.

**Exhibit 3**  
**Mining Employment and Credits Claimed**  
**Calendar 1981-2011**



Source: Maryland Bureau of Mines; State Department of Assessments and Taxation; Department of Legislative Services

**State Revenues:** The bill repeals the Maryland-mined coal credit effective in tax year 2015. Based on the amount of coal mined in the State and credits claimed in the last several years, it is estimated that the maximum amount of annual credits will be awarded under current law. All of the credits in recent years have been claimed against the public service company franchise tax; as a result, general fund revenues increase by \$3.0 million annually in fiscal 2016 through 2021. Accelerating the termination date increases State revenues by a total of \$18.0 million through fiscal 2021.

To the extent taxpayers adjust quarterly payments, revenue increases will be greater than estimated in fiscal 2016.

## **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** HB 1085 of 2014, HB 11 of 2013, and HB 24 of 2012 received a hearing in the House Ways and Means Committee, but no further action was taken. HB 918 of 2011 received an unfavorable report from the House Ways and Means Committee. As introduced by the Governor, the Budget Reconciliation and Financing Acts of 2011, 2012, and 2013 included a provision repealing the credit but it was not included in the legislation passed by the General Assembly.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** State Department of Assessments and Taxation, Comptroller's Office, Maryland Bureau of Mines, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 20, 2015  
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