

	DOW 51,828.62 478.64 0.93%		NASDAQ 27,068.72 129.34 0.48%		S&P 500 7,743.41 39.28 0.51%		GOLD 4,287.90 24.90 0.58%
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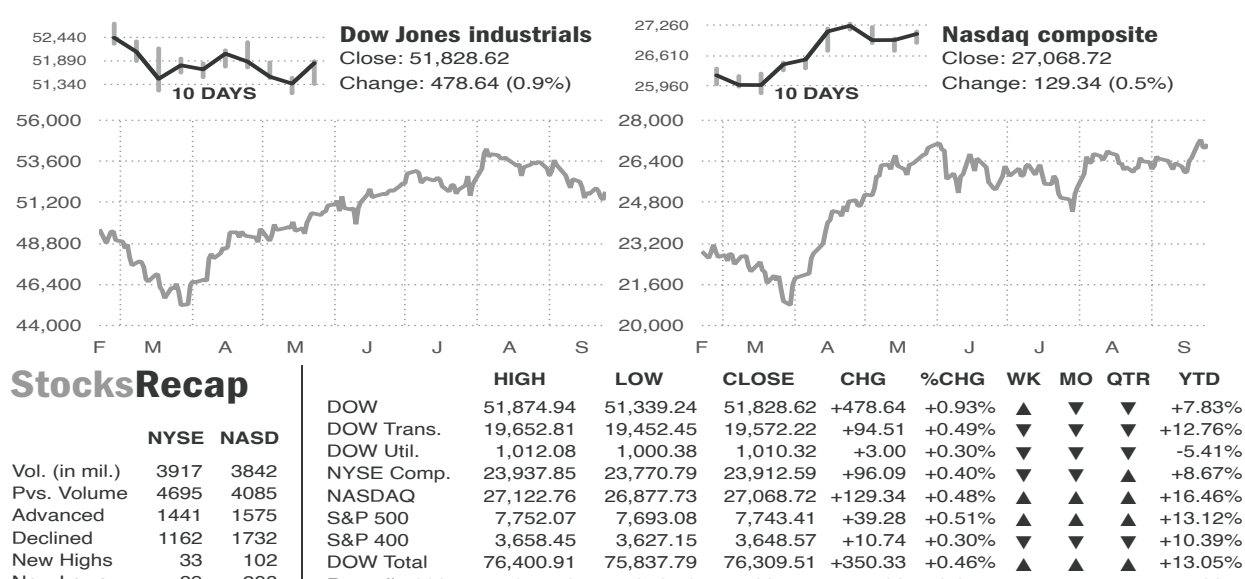
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Beshear backs black lung bill in Congress

BY SARAH LADD
KENTUCKY LANTERN

Gov. Andy Beshear asked Kentucky's congressional delegation in a Thursday letter to throw their support behind a bill amending the Black Lung Benefits Act to "provide adequate benefits for miners suffering from black lung disease."

The Black Lung Benefits Act "provides monthly payments

and medical benefits to coal miners totally disabled from pneumoconiosis (black lung disease) arising from their employment in or around the nation's coal mines," according to the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs in the U.S. Department of Labor.

The bill Beshear is supporting, H. R. 9556 from Pennsylvania Democrat Rep. Summer Lee,

hasn't moved since June 30.

According to the bill: "When section 412 of the Black Lung Benefits Act was enacted in 1969, a miner received about \$144.50 per month to help support their cost of living, equating to about \$1,252.53 annually in today's currency, adjusting for inflation."

"The benefit rate, as established in 1969, has not kept up

with the cost of living," Lee's bill states. "Today, miners receive nearly 40 percent less than the value of the original amount adjusting for inflation."

Kentucky Public Media and NPR reported in August that Appalachia is seeing the highest number of cases in 50 years.

Although the Support Our Miners Act is supported by many local officials, including

many Republicans, most of Kentucky's federal delegation has stayed silent. A Kentucky Lantern story in July asked each member to respond; only Rep. Hal Rogers did so, saying Democrats "aren't being transparent about their movement to destroy the trust fund through their targeted War on Coal, and sticking taxpayers with the bill."

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