



The Alliance for Appalachia

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November 24, 2008

Hello,

The Alliance for Appalachia and many of our partners from across the US working on the community impacts of coal -- from extraction to burning to waste disposal to global warming-- from Alaska to Arizona to West Virginia, have noticed that we are suffering many of the same problems with the coal industry --largely due to previous administrations' systemic lack of enforcement of the coal industry. Because of these tremendous problems in the thousands of communities we represent, and because of our new hope for change with a new administration, we have joined together to ask if you could share the following letter with members of the Obama transition team working on issues related to energy and the environment.

Please let me know if you would like additional information on any of the issues listed below.

We're excited to work with you on these issues.

Sincerely,

Dana Kuhnline
Coordinator
The Alliance for Appalachia



November 24, 2008

Dear President-Elect Obama,

We are writing to enlist your help on a matter of the utmost importance to your constituents living with the impacts of coal. Although you will hear from us both individually and collectively in the future on other issues, our concern today surrounds the appointees for the Secretary of the Interior, Director of the Office of Surface Mining, Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health, and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Many of us are citizens who are dealing with the devastating effects of the cycle of coal, from extraction, cleaning, transport, burning and the disposal of coal combustion waste. Coal industry abuse has cost many of us our homes, our health, our loved ones, and sometimes our entire community, often because of the systemic lack of enforcement of federal regulatory agencies.

Therefore, it is absolutely essential that all of these posts be filled by people who fully and fairly enforce laws relating to underground and surface mining, mine safety and health, coal burning and coal combustion waste. Many Americans are unaware of the role coal plays in our energy supply, and they would be shocked to learn of the flagrant disregard for the law shown by coal companies and the lack of enforcement by the agencies charged with protecting our communities from these abuses. We need appointees to these positions who understand their roles and are committed to enforcing the laws. Perhaps most important, full and fair enforcement of mining laws will only be possible with an authentic, public mandate from your administration.

Appointees to these agencies should not have ties to the coal industry. For decades, these offices have been filled with people beholden to the coal industry on the argument that they understood the industry best. The reality instead has been that they are loyal to the industry, and often go back to work for it once their terms are finished. Scores, if not hundreds, of other people across the country with no ties to the industry understand these issues just as well and can act impartially.

We also urge you to eliminate from your short list anyone who is on record calling for rollbacks of existing rules and regulations governing coal. As you know, eight years of the Bush Administration has already weakened environmental laws, and we cannot afford further erosion. The laws have been eviscerated by administrative regulatory rewrites, flawed judicial decisions, and poor enforcement practices.

Appointees within your administration must be committed to work to *change* the government's chronically weak oversight.



We would expect these appointees to be responsive to ordinary citizens living in affected areas and not be vulnerable to the influence of powerful special interests.

It is also essential that we reintroduce a commitment to authentic science in the formulation of policies and rules—particularly those scientific studies that show the impacts of coal on human health.

The communities in which coal is mined, burned, and disposed have made enormous sacrifices to give America power and yet we remain among the poorest communities in the United States. Many miners and other coal workers have lost their lives as a result of poor safety enforcement. We have a vision of long term economic and environmental prosperity for our communities, but we can't achieve this without support from our government.

You have given America new hope for an administration that carefully considers the effects of its actions on ordinary citizens. Coal mining laws directly impact coalfield residents every day. When the laws are enforced, people and their land have hope that they will be protected. When laws are violated, disasters can and do occur. You have the power to protect the land and people through your appointments to these important posts. We urge you to consider your decisions carefully.

Sincerely,

Alaska Coal Working Group
Alliance for Appalachia
Appalachian Community Economics
Appalachian Citizen's Law Center
Appalachian Voices
Alternative Transportation Club & Electric Auto Association of Northern Nevada
Bardwell Consulting, Ltd
Caney Fork Headwaters Association
Center for Coalfield Justice
Chesapeake Climate Action Network
Citizen's Action Coalition of Indiana
Citizens Against Longwall Mining
Citizens Coal Council
Citizens Organizing Project
CLEAN -- Citizens Lead for Energy Action Now
Clean Power Now
Coal River Mountain Watch
CoalSwarm
Concerned Citizens of Carroll County



Cook Inletkeeper
Citizens Organizing for Resources & Environment (CORE)
Cumberland Countians for Peace & Justice
Dakota Resource Council
Dooda (NO) Desert Rock Organization
Earth Action Network
Energy Action Coalition
Environmental Justice Advocates (EJA)
Friends of Hurricane Creek
Greenpeace US
Groundwater Awareness League, Inc.
Headwater Productions
HealthLink
Heartwood
Jefferson Action Group
Karst Environmental Education & Protection, Inc.
Kentuckians for the Commonwealth
Kentucky Heartwood
Law Office of Gina Hardin, LLC
Lexington Environmental Action Project (LEAP)
Los Alamos Study Group
Massachusetts Climate Action Network
Mountain Justice
Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility
New York Loves Mountains
Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition
Peace and Social Justice Committee of the Charleston Friends Meeting
Powder River Basin Resource Council
Rainforest Action Network
Save Our Cumberland Mountains
Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards
Student Environmental Action Coalition
Tallahassee Area Community, Inc
Ten Mile Protection Network
U.S. Climate Emergency Council
Valley Watch Inc.
Western Organization of Resource Councils