

Congressman Harold Rogers (KY-05)

EPA Clean Power Plan Comment

December 1, 2014

Since the EPA released its Clean Power Plan in June of this year, the agency has heard from thousands of business owners, workers and everyday American citizens who have been adversely impacted by this agency's overzealous regulatory agenda. The proposed Section 111(d) rule regulating emissions from existing coal-fired power plants is the EPA's boldest move yet in its quest to crush the coal mining industry in the United States.

In this proposal, the EPA orders the Commonwealth of Kentucky to reduce carbon emissions from its 20 coal-fired power plants by 18% before the year 2030. As one of the nation's leading producers of electricity, Kentucky relies on the coal industry to keep energy prices low. The EPA's unrealistic goals for Kentucky will harm the coal industry considerably, forcing electricity prices to skyrocket for our businesses and homeowners alike, and subsequently fracture the foundation of many Eastern Kentucky communities.

In my District and throughout the Appalachian region, the coal mining industry anchors countless communities and provides reliable income for thousands of hardworking individuals. Currently, the industry employs roughly 11,670 miners in Kentucky, where the average wage for a miner is over \$70,000. These miners earn, on average, 79% more than private sector employees in the State and 46% more than private sector employees across the country.

These high-paying jobs are critical to the local communities where these workers live. However, onerous EPA regulations have cost us well over 7,000 mining jobs in Eastern

Kentucky since 2011. With every mining job supporting at least three jobs in related industries, it is clear that the impacts of this regulatory agenda go far beyond the coal mining community.

Over the last several years, I have witnessed this agency work relentlessly and in contravention to the U.S. Congress to diminish the pride and livelihood of hardworking Kentuckians in the coal industry. At the misguided direction of the EPA, mining permits have languished, court decisions are summarily disregarded, once-productive mines sit idle, and new rules have made it almost impossible to mine coal.

While coal still provides over 90% of the state's electricity, this War on Coal has forced Kentucky's total coal production to fall 11.8% since 2012, bringing production to its lowest level since 1963. In 2012, two years before the EPA unveiled its Clean Power Plan, the Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet projected that electricity fees in the Commonwealth would increase 25% between 2011 and 2025, resulting in roughly 30,000 lost jobs. In the same report, the Cabinet warned that increasing energy costs would cause the State to eliminate 17,500 full-time positions in the manufacturing sector alone. There is no doubt that this overly burdensome rule will only serve to worsen these already worrisome prospects for job creation and electricity costs in the Commonwealth.

The economic uncertainty driven by this bureaucratic overreach will inevitably raise energy costs, send businesses overseas and push more Americans onto the unemployment lines. In 2008, President Obama conceded that under his agenda "electricity rates would necessarily skyrocket," and the EPA found through its own analysis that this rule would raise average national electricity rates more than 6% in the next decade. Not only is this agency willing to allow unknowing consumers to shoulder increased energy costs, but it is also so intent on vilifying coal that it

would rather implement economically unsound regulations than allow for the continued utilization of coal, the nation's most abundant natural resource.

Furthermore, it is my understanding that the EPA's listening sessions were intended to gather input from stakeholders, including those who would be directly impacted by this proposed rule. However, I was extremely disappointed to see that, despite numerous invitations from my colleagues, the EPA chose not to hold any of its four listening sessions in a coal producing region. The EPA's decision to make it difficult for those who work in the industry to express their concerns about a rule that will undoubtedly impact their livelihoods demonstrates this agency's lack of concern for the real world consequences of its actions.

My State of Kentucky prides itself on the provision of affordable energy through a thriving and reliable coal mining industry. The communities in my District in Eastern and Southern Kentucky already feel the devastating impacts of these policies and currently have some of the highest unemployment rates in the nation. The continued imposition of strict regulations on coal-fired power plants is forcing companies to close their doors, and lay off hardworking individuals with few other employment options.

This piecemeal destruction of the Kentucky economy poses significant harm to our national domestic energy supply. Rather than forging a realistic path toward a thriving energy economy, the EPA has wrapped reliable energy production in red tape and effectively shuttered a crucial domestic industry. This agency should join me in supporting a true "all of the above" energy policy, and work with Congress to propel this nation forward on its path toward achieving energy independence. I urge the EPA to heed the concerns of the business owners, workers and

everyday American citizens who oppose this agency's burdensome regulatory scheme and withdraw this costly proposed rule.