



APPALACHIAN VOICES

Bringing people together to defend Appalachia's rich natural and cultural heritage

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For immediate release

Legislators Introduce Appalachian Mountains Preservation Act

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Raleigh, NC — North Carolina lawmakers, led by Rep. Pricey Harrison (D-57), introduced the Appalachian Mountains Preservation Act, urging passage of the bill that would phase out state electric utility purchases of coal from mountaintop removal mines.

Rep. Harrison was the bill's lead sponsor in the House, state Senator Steve Goss (D-45) introduced a companion bill in the state Senate.

"We've modernized almost every aspect of our lives, but we still use coal to power our Blackberries and laptops," said Rep. Pricey Harrison, a legislator from Greensboro who introduced similar legislation last year. "This bill helps us move away from the very worst kind of coal mining."

The state of North Carolina is currently the second largest consumer of mountaintop removal-mined coal, a controversial extraction method that destroys forests, wildlife and watersheds, and disables local communities. As of 2009, mountaintop removal coal mining had permanently leveled more than 470 peaks from the Appalachian skyline, had buried or polluted more than 1,200 miles of pristine headwater streams, and had forever altered more than 800 square miles of one of America's most diverse and valuable ecosystems.

"I believe this bill shows people in North Carolina and the nation that we are serious about our environment and the future world that we will leave to our children and grandchildren," said Sen. Goss.

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“I am firmly convinced that mountaintop removal is a moral issue that begs our hearts and minds to do the right thing,” he said. “When this bill becomes law in North Carolina, once again we will take our place as a leader in the [South] concerning environmental issues.”

The Appalachian Mountains Preservation Act was introduced with 27 original bi-partisan co-sponsors in the North Carolina House. Thirty percent of North Carolina's electricity is generated from the burning of mountaintop removal mined coal.

“Relying on such a controversial practice for 30 percent of our electricity supply puts North Carolina’s economy at serious risk,” said Dr. Matthew Wasson, Director of Programs at Appalachian Voices. “Federal and state bills to restrict mountaintop removal are gaining momentum, federal lawsuits against burying streams are increasingly successful, and the Obama administration has repeatedly criticized the practice. We need to get off the mountaintop removal coal train before it crashes.”

“[This bill] is going to save ratepayers money in the long run, and it is simply the right thing to do,” said Rep. Harrison.

“North Carolina has taken the lead, and continues to work towards a clean energy future in the South,” she said. “This bill continues the momentum.”

Harrison pointed out that in 2002, North Carolina passed the Clean Smokestacks Act and, earlier this year, the state won a major legal victory over air pollution from the Tennessee Valley Authority.

North Carolina has also adopted a Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard and created the Legislative Commission on Global Climate Change and the NC Green Business Fund.

The states of Georgia, Maryland and Tennessee have also seen new legislation aimed at preserving the Appalachian Mountains. In Georgia, House Bill 276, introduced Feb. 6, 2009 by Rep. Mary Margaret Oliver, would gradually phase out Central Appalachian “mountaintop removal” coal. The Maryland House was scheduled to hold a hearing yesterday (Feb. 25th) on HB 743, sponsored by Delegate Tom Hucker, banning the purchase of coal from mountaintop removal mines by state utilities. Next week, the Tennessee Senate will hold a hearing on the Scenic Vistas Protection Act (SB 1406), a bill to prevent mountaintop removal from expanding into the Cumberland region and wildlife sanctuaries.

Left unchecked, mountaintop removal coal mining will continue to irreversibly destroy the people, communities, cultural heritage, environment and wildlife resources of the Appalachian Mountains.

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A media kit containing the bill legislation, audio/visual materials, and a Q&A fact sheet are available at www.appvoices.org/ampa. For a DVD of these materials, please contact Jamie Goodman at 828-262-1500.

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