

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader, House of Representatives
H-107, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader, House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader, United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader, United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

March 9th, 2020

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Leader Hoyer and Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we urge you to support legislation critical to the communities, miners and families most affected by America's declining demand for coal.

Communities from West Virginia to Wyoming are working to build a bright economic future as we cope with the realities of a changing energy landscape. For more than a century, coal communities have been instrumental in powering the national economy, and have made heavy sacrifices to provide electricity for the nation. Coal-dependent areas have built their economies around coal, not only for the employment of their citizens, but for the revenue that supports their schools, infrastructure, and small businesses. The shift in America's energy use has resulted in massive job losses nationwide, and has left local economies struggling.

Despite the current challenges, these communities are home to rich assets, including our land, water, heritage, wildlife, and people. Many of our organizations and local governments are working to leverage these assets as we diversify and strengthen our local economies.

There are several key opportunities for exciting bipartisan legislation to support miners, clean up environmental hazards, lay the foundation for new ventures, and create an economic boost for communities struggling with the decline of the coal industry.

We urge Congress to bring these key pieces of legislation to the floor:

- **Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act Amendments of 2019**, to address the clean-up of dangerous and polluting abandoned mine lands;
- **The RECLAIM Act**, to spur immediate job creation and create the conditions for longer term, locally driven economic development efforts in coal communities;
- **Black Lung Benefits Disability Trust Fund Solvency Act**, to fund the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund (BLDTF).

Abandoned mine lands (AML) create negative impacts on local economies by destroying recreational opportunities, degrading wildlife habitat, lowering land values, limiting the potential for residential, forestry, commercial or agricultural uses, and threatening human health and safety of people living near AML sites. However, the reclamation of AML sites adds to the economy by creating jobs and providing sites that can be used for commercial or industrial endeavors. This successful program has enabled the restoration of over \$5.7 billion worth of AML projects and the reclamation of nearly 800,000 acres of damaged land and water across the country.

However, the reclamation work is far from complete. Unaddressed abandoned mine sites represent more than \$10 billion in unfunded taxpayer liability, and are a continuing threat to the health, economy, and living environments for citizens of these communities. This successful program must continue to be funded.

In addition to a 15-year extension of the AML fee, Congress should address the current economic crisis in coal communities with the immediate release of currently unappropriated AML funds to spur immediate job creation and create the conditions for longer term, locally driven economic development efforts to build better, brighter futures in coal communities across the country, at no additional cost to taxpayers.

Further, a long term legislative fix is critical to support coal miners suffering from black lung. Coal companies pay the Black Lung Excise Tax to provide healthcare and disability benefits to miners with black lung in cases where the miners' employer has gone bankrupt. Though Congress has extended the tax at its historic rate for one year, that is not sufficient. The Government Accountability Office found a lowered tax rate will leave the fund \$15 billion in debt by 2050, and would likely require a bailout by taxpayers.

This funding is vital for our disabled miners' essential needs, as well as providing basic support for the widows of miners lost to black lung. If Congress doesn't act to extend the tax rate for at least 10 years, thousands of coal miners are at risk of losing the benefits they depend on to breathe.

Rebuilding regional economies takes many years. Coal communities and workers have powered American homes and businesses for more than a century, and they deserve support as America's energy landscape changes. We urge Congress to fully fund the agencies and programs responsible for assisting coal-impacted communities in diversifying and growing their local economies.

Sincerely,

National and Regional

The Alliance for Appalachia

Appalachian Voices

BlueGreen Alliance

Center for Biological Diversity

Christians for the Mountains

Citizens Coal Council

Damascus Citizens for Sustainability

Defenders of Wildlife

Earth Action, Inc.

Earthjustice
Environmental Defense Fund
Friends of the Earth
Grassroots Global Justice Alliance
Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy
Highlander Center
Institute for Sustainable Power
Interfaith Oceans
Interfaith Power & Light
Labor Network for Sustainability
League of Conservation Voters
National Religious Coalition on Creation Care
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council
Partnership for Responsible Growth
Rising Tide North America
Science for the People
Sierra Club
SouthWings
Stay Together Appalachian Youth Project
United Steelworkers
Union of Concerned Scientists
Utility Workers Union of America, AFL-CIO
The Wilderness Society
Western Organization of Resource Councils
World Stewardship Institute

Arizona

Arizona Interfaith Power & Light

California

Contra Costa Racial Justice Coalition
Sunflower Alliance

Colorado

Western Colorado Alliance

Illinois

Central Illinois Healthy Community Alliance (CIHCA)
Clean Power Lake County
The Climate Reality Project — Chicago Chapter
Eco-Justice Collaborative
Faith in Place Action Fund
Grow Gillespie
Illinois People's Action
Nuclear Energy Information Service (NEIS)
ONE Northside

Prairie Rivers Network
Respiratory Health Association
Save Our Illinois Land
350Kishwaukee

Kentucky

Appalachian Citizens' Law Center
Appalshop, Inc.
Center for Rural Strategies
Community Farm Alliance
East Kentucky Coalfield Black Lung Association
Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky
Kentuckians For The Commonwealth
Kentucky Center for Economic Policy
The Kentucky Council of Churches
Kentucky Interfaith Power and Light
Kentucky Resources Council
Lake Cumberland Area Development District
MACED

Massachusetts

GreenRoots

Montana

Northern Plains Resource Council

New York

Citizens For Water
NYH2o

North Carolina

North Carolina Climate Justice Collective
North Carolina Council of Churches

Ohio

Appalachian Partnership, Inc.
FreshWater Accountability Project
Policy Matters Ohio
Rural Action
Thrive At Life: Working Solutions

Pennsylvania

Breathe Project
Center for Coalfield Justice
Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future (PennFuture)
EPCAMR - Eastern Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation
Keystone Research Center

Mehoopany Creek Watershed Association
Moshannon Creek Watershed Association
Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Pennsylvania Interfaith Power & Light
Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Sentinel, LLC

Tennessee

Clean Water Expected in East Tennessee
Clearfork Community Institute
Interfaith Worker Justice of East Tennessee
Jobs with Justice of East TN
Mountain Women's Exchange
Statewide Organizing for Community eMpowerment (SOCM)
Tennessee Appalachian Community Economics (TNACE)
Tennessee Clean Water Network
Tennessee Interfaith Power & Light
Trees and More
Woodland Community Development Corp.
Woodland Community Land Trust

Virginia

Black Lung Association of Southwest Virginia, Chapter 1
Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards

West Virginia

Coalfield Development
OVEC-Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition
Southern Appalachian Labor School
West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy
West Virginia Council of Churches
West Virginia Citizen Action
West Virginia Interfaith Power & Light
West Virginia Rivers Coalition

Wyoming

Powder River Basin Resource Council