

**Testimony of Jordan R. Bridges - Coal Miner (Heavy Equipment Operator)**

Before the House Appropriations Committee  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies

March 18, 2015

Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum, and members of this subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity. This testimony is intended to discuss the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and this administration's abuse of rules. I am testifying about the devastating effects that the EPA's regulatory overreach against the coal industry is having on my family, my friends, and my co-workers.

The EPA has no regard for the consequences of its regulations and the effect that it has on the economy. There are thousands of people who have lost their jobs, and there are no other jobs available in this area. These hard-working people are losing their homes, their ability to provide for their families, and their livelihood. This agency's regulations are forcing people to relocate and infringing upon our rights as American citizens. The downfall of the coal industry not only affects us coalminers, but other jobs and companies as well. These companies exist because of us; they manufacture supplies, parts, and equipment specifically for the coal industry. I have many friends who now have to worry about their job as well. At this rate there will be nothing left in southern West Virginia if we don't stop this war on American jobs.

Retraining has not been offered to us and if it was, how are we supposed to support our families during the process? Unemployment statistics are incorrect; they have not accounted for the people whose unemployment has run out and are unable to find other work. Unemployment does not come close to the income needed to live on and minimum wage cannot support a family. There are many men and women who have spent the majority of their lives in this industry and are unable to start over with a new career nor should they have to.

Safety is a priority for this industry, and we strive to be as environmentally friendly as possible. There has to be a balance, a balance between doing what's best for the environment and doing what's best for the economy. You cannot expect families to suffer and go without food, shelter, and supplies to save a tree. Strip mining is repeatedly attacked as being an eyesore, as being destructive, and cruel. But the fact is, once the mining is done we use the land for many different things. We plant trees, grass, and other plants. The land can and has been used for schools, government buildings, factories, orchards, grazing pastures, a United States Air force training facility, or just put back the way it was. The EPA refuses to do so, but while they continue to make assumptions from behind a desk, I invite you to come see the process and the end result for yourself.

I want to work and I love the job that I do. I work with great people and none of us deserve to go through this. We are doing what we need to do to provide for our families and we feel as if our right to work is being taken from us by the EPA. We have no desire to live off the government nor should we have to. We feel belittled by the EPA because of the job we do. They refuse to meet with us or to hear us out. We are shut out of the decision-making process even though it directly affects us.

I may not be part of a group or organization, but I am an American citizen with a strong work ethic and take pride in my job. I am simply asking for the government to get off our backs and let us work. I ask you to please recognize the very real impact these rules are having on our industry. When you craft the funding bill for the EPA this year, please keep the hard-working people of West Virginia and across this nation in mind.