



Chairman Ken Calvert

*Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations*

**Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Oversight Hearing:
Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation and Enforcement
March 3, 2016
Opening Statement as Prepared**

Good morning and welcome Director Pizarchik. Thank you for joining us today to discuss your 2017 budget request for the Office of Surface Mining.

I believe fiscal year 2012 was the last time we had a budget hearing with you, so thank you for coming back. We've seen many similar budget proposals from your Office since then, and you have seen many similar responses from the Committee in return.

Last year, however, the budget proposed the POWER+ initiative to accelerate Federal funding for the reclamation of abandoned mine land areas and to promote economic development in those local economies. Chairman Rogers, Congressman Jenkins and I took a look and supported the overall concept. Several administrative components generated concerns which prompted a re-tooled, streamlined approach that we thought should be tested in a few States before making changes to the underlying law. The Subcommittee has a high expectation for the success of the pilot included in the FY16 Omnibus, and we'll want to discuss our vision for a successful implementation today.

I know that Chairman Rogers would like to be here today, but unfortunately he has some other pressing commitments at this time. We ask that his testimony be entered into the record. As you know, his district in Kentucky is experiencing an unemployment crisis, and he asked me to convey his thanks for your partnership in implementing this AML pilot program.

Despite these good faith efforts and recognition by the Administration of the dire straits in coal country, I share in the Chairman's disappointment that the Administration continues to pursue a "keep it in the ground" policy when it comes to coal. While innovative economic development initiatives are a part of the solution, the Chairman knows we will not be able to turn this situation around – or provide meaningful support to the 10,000 coal miners in his district who are out of work – without regulatory relief.

The Stream Protection Rule is a prime example of this overreach, and I trust you have seen the letter that Chairman Rogers and I sent to Secretary Jewell on February 4th regarding the directives in the FY16 Omnibus related to the rule. As we discussed with the Secretary yesterday, these directives reflect an agreement between Congress and the Administration that

OSM has not been working with the States as partners. We'd like to discuss how that will change this year.

It is also timely that we have this hearing today so we may recognize the Budget Director, Ruth Stokes. Today is her last day and it's only fitting that we offer our gratitude for her many years of service to our country. I understand there is some room for interpretation regarding whether we are saying goodbye after 38 years vs. 39 years. We'll round up, and hope you can plan some long awaited trips independent of the budget cycle. We wish you all the best in retirement.

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