

**Roger Horton, president, Citizens for Coal
Testimony to be given before the
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Witness Organization: Citizens for Coal**

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Hello, my name is Roger Horton, a now retired coal miner, member of the United Mine Workers of America and president of Citizens for Coal, a group I formed five years ago to provide a voice for the working men and women of the coal industry and their families.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to talk with you today and share with you what is happening in communities across the Appalachian coalfields.

Today's hearing is intended to investigate the damage being done to the coal industry by the Obama EPA and their "war on coal."

Let me say bluntly, there IS a war on coal. I have seen it and lived it every day for the past five years. Over the past year alone, West Virginia has lost more than 3500 direct coal mining jobs and approximately 10,000 more indirect jobs. Using the average wage of coal mining and coal support jobs as the standard, that means that our state has lost an estimated \$924 MILLION in wages — that's right, almost \$1 BILLION ripped from the economy in just the past year.

When you look across the Appalachian coalfields, more than 10,000 coal miners and another 50,000 support workers and people whose jobs depend on coal mining are now unemployed across the coalfields of West Virginia, western Virginia and Kentucky.

These people are unemployed today for one primary reason – the anti-coal policies of the Obama Administration.

While it is true that part of the problem in the short term is the artificially and unsustainably low price of natural gas, the Obama Administration and the EPA have made it next to impossible to use coal as a fuel for electric generation or even to mine it in the first place.

These factors have led many utility companies to take steps to close older coal-fired power plants and it appears likely if the policies continue into the future, even newer coal plants will begin closing. Meanwhile, it is almost impossible to get the permits necessary to mine steam coal – which has historically accounted for approximately 60 percent of the area's production.

The result of all this is a steep decline in production – from 168 million tons in 2008 to just 110 million tons in 2012 in West Virginia, and an even sharper decline in Kentucky. Employment has fallen just as steeply, with seemingly weekly announcements of another mine closing taking hundreds more jobs with it.

Yet the EPA, the White House and some of their friends in the media claim there is no war on coal, but even Obama's Science Advisor Daniel Shrag has admitted this war is being waged.

Shrag recently said. "Politically, the White House is hesitant to say they're having a war on coal. On the other hand, a war on coal is exactly what's needed."

Now you can make the claim — as some do — that other factors have hurt coal, and, yes, that is true, but the bottom line is that the Obama administration has single-handedly made it nearly impossible to get a permit to mine coal, forced the closure of hundreds of coal-fired power plants as well as now setting the stage for the closure of hundreds more over the next few years, and now they are trying to make it impossible to export our coal to countries who DO understand the value of cheap, affordable energy. Obama, Schrag and others are determined to destroy the coal industry and have been since Obama took office in January 2009.

Even before the election, Obama said plainly and simply that he would put in place regulations that would "bankrupt" anyone wanting to build a coal-fired power plant, and sadly that is one promise he has kept.

Today, our electricity grid is strained to meet demand — with rolling blackouts imposed in rural areas of the PJM Connections district as recently as three weeks ago. While these blackouts were couched as a "voluntary demand response" to meet temporary conditions, the reality — no matter how you cut it — is that the grid was short of capacity and "voluntary" rolling blackouts were imposed to cut demand allowing the grid to avoid massive blackouts in urban areas.

I believe it is vital that we keep our electric generation grid nimble and able to readily switch between fuels, including coal, natural gas, oil and renewables. I remember clearly five years ago — before the beginning of the "Great Recession" — when our economy and the world's economy was humming along. We were screaming out for every ton of coal, every gallon of oil, every cubic foot of natural gas and every other source of energy we could find. Prices of all forms of energy were going out the roof because supply couldn't keep up with demand.

Hopefully, we will find our way out of the current economic downturn and restore our economy and that of the world to something approaching normal and when we do we will once again find our economy needing all sources of fuel.

If we retire coal-fired capacity and essentially shut the door to it in the future, we are setting the stage for a major inflationary spiral in our energy costs and with it the downstream costs of every other good in our economy.

We need to protect our coal-fired capacity in order to provide for the widest possible fuel choice down the road.

Just a few weeks ago, a group of local Democratic leaders went to Washington to try to discuss the issues with the new EPA. They came away believing it might be a new start but those ideas fell to the floor this past month when it became clear the EPA would announce new regulations that would effectively end the use of coal for electric generation. It is clear

that the Obama Administration and the national Democratic Party care nothing for the hard working men and women who mine coal for a living.

Sitting in the Senate is a basket of bills – already passed by the House of Representatives — that would effectively end the Obama War on Coal. However the bills are being stonewalled by the Obama Administration and its lapdog Senate President Harry Reid.

In closing, I simply observe that the president speaks a lot about economic justice and hope and promise. I would to use this hearing to directly ask the President, where is the justice for West Virginia and Appalachia? Where is the hope and justice for our coal mining families?

There are few other career options available for many of our miners, and by his actions, this president is effectively condemning them to lives of poverty and despair. Again, I ask where is the justice? Why are our families less important to you than others? Why don't we matter to you, Mr. President? Please, let us work and power America.