

Opening Statement:

This 4th of July we passed a milestone: it was the hottest day ever recorded on planet Earth. Just two days later, the global temperature record was broken once again. In fact, our planet reached the hottest day ever recorded **four days in a row last week**.

For millions of Americans who are unable to access shelter or air conditioning, this past week was deadly. At least fourteen people died in Texas and Louisiana, and hundreds were sent to emergency rooms.

In my home state of New York, flash flooding two days ago left one person dead and entire neighborhoods flooded.

This is the climate crisis, and this is just the beginning.

It is for this reason that immediate and bold action is necessary to rapidly decarbonize every single sector of the U.S. economy.

Coal on public lands has an especially big role to play in this energy transition. Coal creates **the most** carbon pollution of any energy source. Today, we get about twenty percent of our electricity from coal, but coal accounts for fifty-five percent of the electricity sector's emissions.

Over forty percent of all coal mining in the United States happens on public lands, and the vast majority of this coal is burned for energy production. In fact, the U.S. Geological Survey found that the federal coal program alone is responsible for thirteen percent of our total greenhouse gas pollution.

Let me say that again, **the federal coal program is responsible for thirteen percent of our total greenhouse gas pollution**.

It is clearly time to end all new federal coal leasing on public lands and invest in domestic renewable energy production.

As part of this transition, we must ensure that we are not just trading coal barons for solar barons. We also must make sure that miners and mining communities are given what they are owed.

Miners not only supplied American industry and energy for more than a century, they literally fought and died for workers' rights in this country at a time when union busting was enforced by private militias. I urge everyone in this room who is unfamiliar to look up the Ludlow Massacre or the Colorado Coalfield Wars to understand just a piece of this history.

During the New Deal, it was coal mining organizers who led the way in the founding of the Congress of Industrial Organizations and the unionization of not just coal mining, but sectors like automobiles, steel, and electricity. It was these coal miners who formed the core of the New Deal coalition and built an economy that worked for millions of Americans.

Any one worker who today has a pension or a union owes some thanks to a coal miner.

So our coal miners must be first in line for new jobs in the green energy economy. Their pensions that they've paid into their whole lives must be guaranteed and paid out. The government has the ability to do this - and we must.

My colleagues across the aisle point the finger at the Biden administration's policies, saying that they are hurting coal jobs.

But the truth is that coal production has been in decline for over a decade as the market moves to cheaper, cleaner forms of energy. We know that there is only enough federal coal under lease today to support around twenty more years of mining at current levels.

We'll hear from one of our witnesses today about how the development of metallurgical coal - which is used for steel production, not electricity generation - represents an opportunity for workers in Alabama.

Nearly all metallurgical coal in Alabama comes from private lands, so this testimony is likely related to a proposed lease from the

company Warrior Met to produce metallurgical coal on federal land, which is currently under environmental review.

But the idea that this project will spur the local economy is, frankly, spurious. In a break from tradition, Warrior Met has not even approached the union for this new mine. This isn't surprising, as Warrior Met spent the last two years fighting with striking workers - the longest strike in Alabama history - at their other Brookfield, Alabama site. Rather than spending their money on good local jobs, Warrior Met has chosen to spend it on billboards in West Virginia to hire scabs.

Coal communities don't deserve empty promises from coal barons. They deserve opportunity and diversified economies, and they deserve to be first in line.

This administration created the Energy Communities Interagency Working Group to deliver federal resources to help revitalize America's coal communities.

Last Congress, we passed billions of dollars to create good-paying jobs, spur innovation and economic revitalization, and clean up abandoned mine lands through the Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act, Inflation Reduction Act, and the CHIPS and Science Act.

I and my colleagues are working tirelessly to ensure that this historic investment reaches the people who need it most, and B-L-M must also center these coal communities in their review of the federal coal program.

I know there is no silver bullet. There will be no single industry that will exactly replace these mining jobs and revenues for local governments.

We will hear today from Ms. Sara Kendall, interim Executive Director of the Western Organization of Resource Councils, about how our flawed federal coal program has left local communities bearing too many of the costs without receiving enough of the benefits from coal mining.

We must consider phasing out the federal coal program in a responsible, thoughtful way that protects workers and coal communities, guarantees mine cleanup, and addresses climate change.

This transition will not be easy, but it is essential. The future of our planet and every single working American depends on it.

I yield back.