



## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

# **West Virginia Chamber Calls On State's Congressional Delegation To Withhold Health Care Vote Until 'War On Coal/Energy' Ceases**

November 20, 2009

The West Virginia Chamber of Commerce calls on members of the state's congressional delegation, particularly Senators Byrd and Rockefeller, to withhold voting to advance national health care reform until the Obama Administration and Congress ceases its "war on coal/energy." Since the start of the Obama Administration and the new Congress there has been a growing campaign against the mining and use of coal, stated Steve Roberts, President of the West Virginia Chamber. "This war against coal and domestic energy threatens our state and its citizens with increased poverty, lost tax revenues and economic disruption. This needs to end before irreparable damage sets in."

Roberts noted that job losses and poverty are major factors that contribute to poor health. "No other factor affects a person's -- and a family's health -- than being impoverished," he added. "West Virginia has made good strides over the past five years to improve the health and well-being of its citizens, and a strong, productive state energy industry is central to this."

"It seems counterintuitive to ask taxpayers in this country to pour money and take on a trillion dollars in future debt to expand health care coverage and benefits while at the same time the Obama administration and Congress are working to destroy jobs, eliminate good health care benefits and hurt people's well-being."

Moreover, this new campaign against coal and domestic energy production will only put added pressure on the nation's growing energy needs and costs, and, thereby cause additional jobs to be lost in manufacturing, services, technology and a host of other industries. "Coal, which is an affordable, domestic energy resource used to generate 50 percent of the nation's electricity, should not be cast aside based on the radical viewpoints of the some fringe elements. Nor should new attacks be allowed to start against the domestic natural gas industry."

Roberts called on the state's congressional delegation to withhold voting to advance national health care reform until the Obama Administration, particularly the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, backs down on its campaign against coal. "Votes to advance national health care reform are at razor-thin margins in both houses of Congress, and West Virginia's congressional delegation needs to use this time -- and their clout and seniority -- to get this anti-coal situation stopped."

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# Overview: The “War On Coal/Energy”

## **Carbon Reduction/Cap-And-Trade**

The Obama Administration and Democratic congressional leaders are advancing climate change legislation that will impose new regulations and lead to substantial hikes in energy prices, particularly for electricity generated from coal-fired power plants. Legislation such as H.R. 2454 -- the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009 (ACES Act) and U.S. Senate’s Clean Energy Jobs and American Power Act -- aim to reduce emissions of "global warming pollution," establish a cap-and-trade system, and encourage carbon capture technologies. However, the bills will cause energy prices to increase on all consumers (businesses, individuals, governments, etc.) and will cost thousands and thousands of jobs.

A recent study by the National Association of Manufacturers estimates HR 2454 would cost 1.7 million to 2.4 million jobs nationally by 2030. And, preliminary estimates by WVU’s Bureau of Economic Research shows that West Virginia stands to lose 35,000+ jobs and tens of millions in annual tax revenues.

## **Regulating Carbon Dioxide As A Pollutant**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has taken the first formal step in listing carbon dioxide and methane as pollutants and eventually developing regulations and controls. The EPA issued its proposed finding on April 1, 2009 and stated “greenhouse gases contribute to air pollution that may endanger public health or welfare.” The EPA’s announcement initiated a public comment period on six greenhouse gases that “pose a potential threat.” Among these are carbon dioxide and methane. For more information, go to <http://epa.gov/climatechange/endangerment.html>.

## **Coal Mining Permit Reviews**

The United States Environmental Protection Agency announced March 24, 2009 ([click to read](#)) that the agency would begin reviews of federal mining permits because of “serious concerns about the need to reduce the potential harmful impacts on water quality caused by certain types of coal mining practices, such as mountaintop mining.” The agency said it was taking this step because it has “considerable concern regarding the environmental impact these projects would have on fragile habitats and streams.” Since this announcement, the EPA continues to hold up 79 permit applications, of which 23 are in West Virginia.

## **EPA To Require Greenhouse Gas Emission Permits**

In late September 2009 the U.S. EPA launched a new regulatory initiative designed to “address greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions under the Clean Air Act.” The EPA’s latest proposal will require large industrial facilities, which emit at least 25,000 tons of GHGs, a year to obtain construction and operating permits covering these emissions. “These permits must demonstrate the use of best available control technologies and energy efficiency measures to minimize GHG emissions when facilities are constructed or significantly modified.” According to the EPA’s proposed rule, these large facilities would include power plants, refineries, and factories. Small businesses such as farms, restaurants and many other types of small facilities would not be included in these requirements. Click to see the proposed rules or for more information: <http://www.epa.gov/nsr>

## **EPA To Tighten SO2 Standards From Coal**

For the first time in nearly 40 years, the U.S. EPA is proposing to tighten the nation’s sulfur dioxide (SO2) air quality standard to “protect public health.” This change, announced in November 2009, will

affect coal-fired power plants and other industrial facilities. Click to read more:  
<http://www.epa.gov/air/sulfurdioxide/actions.html#nov09>

### **EPA To Regulate Coal Combustion Byproducts As Hazardous Waste**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is expected to issue a proposed rule regulating coal combustion byproducts (CCBs) as hazardous waste by the end of 2009. The rule is currently being reviewed by the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs and the Small Business Administration. Regulation CCBs as hazardous waste will have potentially devastating economic impacts on the economy. Regulating CCBs as hazardous waste will increase the price of electricity for both businesses and consumers as power generators face higher compliance, transportation, storage, handling, and disposal costs.

### **U.S. Department of Interior Plans To Increase Coal Mining Oversight, New Stream Rules**

The U.S. Department of the Interior announced November 18 that it is taking immediate actions to strengthen oversight of state surface coal mining programs and to promulgate Federal regulations to better protect streams affected by surface coal mining operations. Interior's Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM) is publishing an advance notice of proposed rulemaking regarding the protection of streams from the adverse impacts of surface coal mining operations. The notice requests comments on alternatives for revising the current regulations, which include the stream buffer zone rule issued by the Bush Administration in December 2008. For more information, go to:  
[http://www.doi.gov/news/09\\_News\\_Releases/111809.html](http://www.doi.gov/news/09_News_Releases/111809.html).