



Written by [Bruce Walker](#) on September 16, 2010

Coal Miners Upset With EPA

As America struggles with expensive energy provided by foreign nations without our best interests at heart, West Virginians must wonder why. America is rich in coal, a resource that could supply our nation's energy needs for the foreseeable future. West Virginia, in particular, has a vast abundance of this safe and proven energy source. Moreover, West Virginians, who face serious problems with unemployment, are ready to do the productive and important work of bringing that coal to market in America.



What is the problem? Federal environmental regulations run rampant are constricting the ability of companies to gain the permits that they need to mine for coal. It is not just businessmen who suffer from these federal regulations. Working men, engaged in real work, cannot find jobs in the coal-mining industry because of environmental regulations run wild. Bill Bissett, president of the Kentucky Coal Association, notes that 30 permits that had been issued to mine for coal have since been withdrawn owing to environmental concerns. Bissett points out that investors, who are needed to help begin mining operations, can easily be scared off by these roadblocks.

These environmental policies also hit hardest regions like the West Virginia, Virginia, Ohio, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky coalfields, whose inhabitants have historically been the working poor — those who do not go on welfare, but who need the coal mining jobs to provide for their families. Some of them [held a rally](#) on September 15 in Washington, D.C., to pressure the Obama administration to loosen coal mining regulations that, these workers say, effectively throttles the coal mining industry in their region.

The Obama administration, which loves to cite the “multiplier effect” of employment, must consider that shutting down good-paying jobs in a region affects the whole job community, from waitresses in cafes to sales staff in department stores. These coal miners would doubtless find a sympathetic ear from the Gulf of Mexico oil-rig workers who were effectively given pink slips when Obama overreacted to the Gulf oil spill by banning all operations. Those who invest in these energy-producing activities, in Appalachia or the Gulf of Mexico, must also wonder about the President's insistence that business begin to invest in the economy again.

The timing of the regulations is dubious. The Environmental Protection Agency, at a time when both energy costs and unemployment are high, has chosen to increase restrictions on coal mining on the grounds that the explosives used to remove mountain surfaces sends debris into rivers and streams and so endangers the environment.

Senate Republicans, who side with the workers and coal mine operators, estimate that the EPA regulations jeopardize one quarter of the coal mining jobs in the region. Industry associations concur.

The energy “problems” of America are the consequence of misguided statism. Oil, coal, and natural gas exist in abundance and the extent of unproven reserves of these resources could easily double or triple



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those reserves if exploration were not impeded by an angry nest of environmental interest groups, sympathetic politicians, and compliant federal judges.



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