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COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITY

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
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Congress of the United States
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June 4, 2009

Ms. Lisa Jackson
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Jackson,

We are writing to express strong concerns about the coal mining permit applications currently being held up at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers by the Environmental Protection Agency.

It has come to our attention that more than 200 permit applications to construct and operate coal mines are pending at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) District Offices in Huntington, West Virginia, Louisville, Kentucky and Norfolk, Virginia. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has begun a new process of reviewing lawful permits, hence delaying – or in a sense freezing – the Corps from issuing new permits. While much has been made of the recent approval of 42 long-delayed permits still waiting to be issued, hundreds more remain un-resolved and face further delay. These actions will force mines to idle production and rob us of some of the highest paying jobs in the region.

Little progress has been made in clarifying or providing consistency in the EPA process, leading only to the continued backlog of mining permits and greater confusion for coal mine operators and their employees. Such stability is critical to ensure continued investment in mining efforts, and the economic benefit which accompanies it.

Coal mining is extremely important to our nation's energy portfolio and financial stability. It generates over half of all of our domestic electricity. U.S. coal mining directly employs nearly 120,000 people; for each coal mining job, an additional 3.5 jobs are created elsewhere in the economy. In 2007, coal generated \$30 billion in sales and paid \$8.2 billion in direct wages.

When our nation is already battered by a deepening recession, we cannot sustain any additional job losses and further weakening of our economy. Mining families, communities and businesses deserve better. It is crucial that the EPA work with the Corps to find common ground on the hundreds of permits in question.

Sincerely,

SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO
Member of Congress

JOHN SHIMKUS
Member of Congress



GEOFF DAVIS
Member of Congress



ED WHITFIELD
Member of Congress



CYNTHIA LUMMIS
Member of Congress



PETER ROSKAM
Member of Congress



BOB GOODLATTE
Member of Congress



HAROLD ROGERS
Member of Congress



BRETT GUTHRIE
Member of Congress



DAVID P. ROE
Member of Congress



JOHN J. DUNCAN, Jr.
Member of Congress



JOE BARTON
Member of Congress

cc: The White House
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Huntington District
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Norfolk District
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Louisville District