



News from the United Mine Workers of America, AFL-CIO, CLC

UMWA

18354 Quantico Gateway Drive
Suite 200
Triangle, VA 22172-1179
Cecil E. Roberts, President
Daniel J. Kane, Secretary-Treasurer

Communications Department • 703-291-2405 • FAX 703-291-2447

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CONTACT: Phil Smith, 703-291-2430 or 571-345-8338

EPA existing source emissions rule puts American jobs at risk, does nothing to address climate change

[TRIANGLE, VA.] United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) International President Cecil E. Roberts issued the following statement today:

"The proposed rule issued today by the Environmental Protection Agency will lead to long-term and irreversible job losses for thousands of coal miners, electrical workers, utility workers, boilermakers, railroad workers and others without achieving any significant reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions.

"Our initial analysis indicates that there will be a loss of 75,000 direct coal generation jobs in the United States by 2020. Those are jobs primarily in coal mines, power plants, and railroads. By 2035, those job losses will more than double to 152,000. That amounts to about a 50 percent cut in these well-paying, highly skilled jobs. When a U.S. government economic multiplier used to calculate the impact of job losses is applied to the entire economy, we estimate that the total impact will be about 485,000 permanent jobs lost.

"This is simply a recipe for disaster in America's coalfields, especially the eastern coalfields. That is where the hammer of this rule will fall the hardest. And it's not just that these jobs will be lost, it's that the ability of companies to continue funding pension and retiree health care benefits will be at great risk. That puts hundreds of thousands more - mostly senior citizens living on already-low fixed incomes - squarely in the crosshairs of this rule.

"And no one - no one - can point to a significant reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions that is guaranteed to come from this rule. In my view, the most likely scenario is that global emissions will actually rise as more industrial jobs are moved out of the United States to countries which do not and will not have any kind of emissions rules. This is happening already; this rule will just speed that process up.

"We hear from the supporters of this rule that if the United States 'takes the lead' on reducing carbon emissions, then others will follow. But what evidence do we have that they actually will? And why on earth should we be willing to sacrifice the lives and livelihoods of thousands upon thousands of our fellow citizens on the naive bet that current and emerging economic competitors like China, India, Brazil, Russia and others will follow our lead?

"History shows that they will not. They will, instead, use this as an opportunity to take more of our jobs, more of our industrial base, more of our national wealth.

"Some point to new so-called 'green jobs' that may be created by this rule, and say that there will be a net increase in jobs over time. I don't know how one can actually count jobs that do not yet exist, but I do know this: the jobs that will be lost are among the best paying blue-collar jobs in America, especially in the mostly rural areas of the country where the coalfields are.

"The jobs that we are told will be created will very likely not be in the coalfields, will not pay particularly well, will not have decent benefits, and will not allow workers to realize what we once called the American Dream. The American economy will not benefit from the creation of such jobs because they will come at the expense of the better jobs we have now.

"The UMWA has not and does not dispute the science regarding climate change. Our dispute is with how our government is going about addressing it, and on whom the administration is placing the greatest burden in dealing with this challenge.

"Coal miners have been asked for 150 years to provide the means to energize America and make our nation the strongest on earth. We have always answered that call. We have done what our nation asked of us. But under this rule, our reward is to be kicked to the curb, hopefully out of sight and soon forgotten.

"I assure you, if that is the choice before us, we will not go quietly. We will not be out of sight. We will not be forgotten. You will hear from us."

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