

Senator Ogden Driskill
Wyoming Senate Senate District 01
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April 17, 2017

Re: ONRR Rule comments.

I am writing to comment on your proposed ONRR rule. I am a 7th generation rancher in Northeast Wyoming, our family coming to Wyoming in 1868. We live in the shadow of Devils Tower—home to America's first National Monument. I have watched over the years the development of coal in Northeast Wyoming in an economic and responsible way.

Watching large scale coal mines start, develop and mature during my lifetime has been very interesting. It is incredible when the federal government, state government and local governments all work together to create economic diversity and a thriving robust local economy developing and abundant natural resource in a responsible way.

A big part of making this happen was a fair market valuation of the natural resource. Taking a product that has a supply of thousands of years and valuing it in a manner that made the federal government billions of dollars while also distributing billions of dollars to state and local governments has been a model that should be followed across the board in your decisions. The goal should be responsible, environmentally acceptable mining with the highest return to all.

From the start the approach was to maximize income for the federal, state and local governments—getting a fair price for the coal, while pricing it in a way that all entities could survive and thrive, while being environmentally friendly.

The system that was used was time proven and obviously worked well.

Our economy in Wyoming, the mines that produce the coal and our government depend on stability in how coal is leased and priced. The results of a stable system are shown in many billions of investments in infrastructure by private industry and governments. Doing radical changes to a system that works is reckless and foolhardy.

I contend that the system we have been using is working and working well. The highest value to the federal government is having a thriving economy.

In short we have a system that works—the old adage holds true here “If it isn't broke==DON'T fix it”

Our mining industry, State and local governments depend on a system that is proven and has stability. Something that has been taken away the last few years. The results have been immediate and

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devastating. Without stability and the availability of product for the future our mining industry can't plan for the future. The coal mining industry has been hit from all sides. Excessive government regulations coupled with market instability have caused chaos in the industry. Our state government has lost billions in income from the federal governments war on coal.

Coming up with an alternative system such as is proposed, that breaks industry, cripples governments and eliminates thousands of high paying jobs while supposedly getting a "fair" price is unscrupulous.

With 40% of every dollar taken in from mining coal going to tax revenue to Federal, State and local governments—It is obvious that there is much more from coal than just raising the price to extract to a level that makes all parties become losers.

The last president promised to "shut down the coal industry"—he was extremely successful. Never in my life have I seen an industry attacked from our own government to this extent. Making rules that pick winners and losers is bad policy—trying to break an industry through rules is at best wrong and at worst corrupt.

The current proposed rule is a thinly disguised attempt to put the coal industry out of business. Extreme environmentalists working with bureaucrats to enact rules and regulations that kill an industry is immoral.

We have a system that works fairly—a refinement of existing valuation may be in order—but a complete rewrite of federal rules and regulations is foolhardy.

As a state of Wyoming legislator, I suggest that moves of this latitude are appropriately handled by elected officials. I think that this proposed rule is an overstep by bureaucratic administration on many levels. It goes far beyond rulemaking and wanders into policy and law—something that should not be done in this fashion.

Our State and local governments depend on a fair system that works—like the one we have had in place for decades. It makes no sense to destabilize further what has been a tried and true system.

In short, I encourage you to scrap the proposed rule and return to what is tried and true. A little fine tuning makes more sense than scrapping a tried and true system that has benefitted all. Killing the golden goose makes little sense.

Senator Ogden Driskill

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Ogden Driskill".

Cc: President Donald Trump

Ryan Zinke-Department of Interior