

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business federation representing the interests of more than three million businesses and organizations of every size, sector, and region, strongly urges you to cosponsor newly introduced legislation entitled the "Coal Miner Employment and Domestic Energy Infrastructure Protection Act." This bill would prevent the implementation of the "Stream Protection Rule," a controversial regulation under development by the Department of the Interior's Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM), that would drastically reduce domestic coal production and put thousands of miners out of work.

OSM's forthcoming "Stream Protection Rule" is the latest in a long line of recent environmental regulations that have the potential to put the coal industry out of business. This rule would harm jobs: under OSM's own analysis, coal production would drop between 20 and 30 percent in the Eastern United States and would drop approximately 50 percent in underground mines nationwide, destroying upwards of 20,000 coal mining and related jobs. OSM estimates that the rule would increase the unemployment rate in some coal mining regions to levels exceeding ten percent. Private sector analysis of the rule indicates that job losses could be significantly higher than these OSM's estimates.

Compounding the problem is the recent revelation that OSM officials asked contractors to alter their methodology to mask the regulation's economic impact. OSM has denied any wrongdoing and is investigating the charge.

This bill would give the coal industry a much-needed "time-out" from the "Stream Protection Rule." The industry is already bound by a stream buffer zone rule issued in 2008, the result of a five-year rulemaking process and over 5,000 pages of environmental analysis. Allowing OSM to proceed with the flawed and controversial "Stream Protection Rule" would cost jobs in an industry that simply cannot afford to lose any more.

The Chamber commends Sen. Coats and the cosponsors of this legislation for their leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,



R. Bruce Josten