

The War on Coal

What You Need to Know

The following answers are based on the truth, not “alternative facts”. They are provided by the Bluegrass Activist Alliance Research Team.

Our Values

The Bluegrass Activist Alliance believes human health and welfare take precedence over profits.

Q: Do federal regulations amount to a “war on coal” that is killing jobs in Kentucky?

A: No, the “war on coal” that Republican Rep. Andy Barr speaks of is fake news. Federal environmental regulations are a minor factor in the steady decline of the coal industry over the last few decades. More important economic reasons include depleted mines, automation, increased coal production in western states, and replacement of coal-fired power plants with cheaper, cleaner natural gas and renewable energy. These economic trends cannot be reversed, and no one can “bring back coal.” Reducing regulations, as Barr proposes, will only increase the coal-related health problems that Kentucky now has.

Q: What are those problems?

A: Coal contains poisonous elements like arsenic, lead, mercury, cadmium, uranium and sulfur. Coal-fired energy plants are the largest users of coal, and Kentucky is a major user of coal as an energy source. When coal is burned, thousands of pounds of these elements are released into our air and drinking water. In a 2012 report, pollution from Kentucky power plants was linked to thousands of asthma attacks, 191 hospital admissions, 370 heart attacks, 123 cases of chronic bronchitis, and 259 deaths.

It is no accident that we rank second in the nation in asthma patients.

Q: Only people who live near power plants are affected, right?

A: Wrong. Millions of Kentuckians are affected. Once released into the air, gases and other pollutants can travel hundreds of miles before being inhaled into the lungs.

Q: Barr says more regulations on coal will increase electricity costs. Is he right?

A: It’s true that allowing power plants to further pollute our air and water may make electricity slightly cheaper. But deregulation will only lead to a far higher cost in terms of increased health problems and the cost of treating them. In 2012, the total cost of coal related medical care in Kentucky was estimated at more than \$3 billion. When Barr supports deregulation, he is not working in the best interests of his constituents.

Q: In whose interests is he working then?

A: Coal mining executives benefit the most from deregulation. There are no coal mines in the Sixth District, and yet Barr is one of the biggest recipients of coal industry support on Capitol Hill. Since 2010, mining interests have invested \$435,000 in his campaign committee and political action committee. Not surprisingly, Barr’s votes in Congress have clearly aligned with their best interests, not ours.

“The war on coal” is an empty catchphrase used by politicians like Barr as they work to reverse environmental regulations meant to protect the public. By blaming the government, they avoid addressing the very real problems facing Kentucky coal miners.

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Q: What can we do to help miners and their families?

A: We can create new jobs by developing cleaner, more renewable energy forms with far fewer health complications. We can protect the health of all Kentuckians by supporting regulations that minimize pollution from our existing power plants. And we can send a Democrat to Congress next year who will work in the best interests of all Sixth District constituents, not just the top donors.

For the complete report on “The War on Coal,” Go to