

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

R. BRUCE JOSTEN  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT  
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20062-2000  
202/463-5310

February 28, 2012

The Honorable Doc Hastings  
Chairman  
Committee on Natural Resources  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Edward Markey  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Natural Resources  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Hastings and Ranking Member Markey:

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, supports H.R. 3409, 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 50 percent in underground mines nationwide, destroying 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 10 percent. Private sector analysis of the rule indicates that job losses could be significantly higher than even 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.

H.R. 3409 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 support H.R. 3409, and urges the Committee to report this legislation to the full House as expeditiously as practicable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Bruce Josten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "R." and last name "Josten" being the most prominent parts.

R. Bruce Josten

cc: Members of the House Committee on Natural Resources