



Citizens Coal Council - Working Together for Justice in the Coalfields

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September 10, 2009

Senator Jeff Bingaman
Chairman
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
304 Senate Dirksen Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Bingaman, Request for Meeting with You

I am writing you on behalf of the many citizen environmental leaders around the country and their organizations representing tens of thousands of coalfield citizens who oppose the nomination of Joseph Pizarchik to be Director of the Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE).

Prior to the August 6, 2009 confirmation hearing, citizens adversely affected by coal mining in Pennsylvania and other states requested a citizens panel before your Committee to document and establish why these coalfield citizens and others who are committed to enforcement of the 1977 Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) oppose the nomination based on the nominee's record, disregard, and even opposition to some key provisions of the law.

We received no reply, but the request is now even more compelling that a representative group of citizens meet with you before the Committee takes up consideration of the nominee, as Mr. Pizarchik's record has been more thoroughly examined and there are now more concerns about his candidacy than before the August 6th hearing.

We recognize that your schedule is extremely busy, however, we must live with the consequences of your Committee's action and, based on our experience with OSMRE under Secretary Salazar, we do not have confidence in promises made by the Department of Interior when they are so committed to nominating individuals who put more emphasis on weakening SMCRA rather than enforcing the law as intended by a bipartisan Congress.

Another concern citizen expressed prior to the August 6th hearing was that the Committee would not have sufficient time, the day before the recess, to explore the concerns presented by knowledgeable coalfield citizens and scientists. Indeed, in the end, the hearing was poorly attended due to Senators' pre-recess schedules and the OSMRE nominee interacted with the Committee for approximately 12 minutes.

We respectfully request a small meeting with you prior to Committee consideration of Joseph Pizarchik. Much is at stake, and we hope you will be fair and respectful of the coalfield citizens and the documented information they have assembled.

Sincerely,
Aimee Erickson
Executive Director
Citizens Coal Council