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NATIONAL COAL COUNCIL UNDER INTENSE SCRUTINY

Western Grassroots Groups Urge Termination or Restructuring of DOE Advisory Group

Billings, Montana – Released today, a [letter](#) from members of the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) details a highly inappropriate relationship between the National Coal Council, a federal advisory committee, and its corporate alter ego, National Coal Council, Inc. WORC urges Secretary of Energy, Jennifer Granholm to scrutinize and restructure or terminate the NCC.

The NCC is chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), which exists to facilitate the collection by federal agencies of advice and research from third parties that is [relevant, objective and open to the public, are fairly balanced, and comply with reasonable cost controls](#). WORC's letter describes how the NCC includes no perspectives from individuals or organizations working to address the negative impacts of coal extraction, and there are no clear lines of separation between NCC and NCC, Inc. The industry association blatantly funds and influences the work of the NCC, resulting in biased information to the Department of Energy on behalf of the coal industry.

"For too long the Department of Energy has allowed the coal industry to stack the National Coal Council with industry representatives who meet behind closed door to launder their own interests into federal policy while shutting out the voices of ranchers, landowners, and coal mine neighbors," **said Bob LeResche, Powder River Basin Resource Council and WORC Board Member from Clearmont, Wyoming.** "It's time for the DOE to end this unethical industry influence and form an advisory committee that considers the costs the coal industry wreaks on our communities, our landscapes, and the climate."

"The National Coal Council barely even pretends it is anything more than a corporate lobbying group. The council abuses the credibility of the federal government and misuses tax dollars to further corporate interests," **said Mark Fix, a member and past chair of Northern Plains Resource Council who ranches in eastern Montana's coal country.** "At a minimum, the council should be disbanded and reformed. However, the blatant corruption goes so deep, I'm not sure this specific entity could earn credibility no matter the reforms or restructuring."

Under the Trump Administration's "Energy Dominance" agenda, the NCC's focus shifted to advocate for the increased use and financial support of coal. Specific examples from this time described in WORC's letter include:

- NCC events, often including dinner, drinks, and social time, are funded by the coal industry, and that this funding blatantly influences the work of the NCC. For example, at

one recent NCC meeting, the federal advisory committee received a presentation on NCC, Inc.'s financing, in which the speaker lauded the approval of new appointments by the DOE Secretary to the NCC because they would generate additional revenue for NCC, Inc.

- The Council appears to believe that it has a single-focus policy mission of propping up the coal industry. One NCC speaker put it best when he said, “the single most important priority for the committee” is to “preserve and rejuvenate the existing coal fleet.”
- In another instance, the Chairman of an NCC subcommittee admitted that while the NCC seeks to give the DOE the advice it seeks, the NCC has a parallel goal of, “at the same time, serving our own strategic objectives.”
- NCC speakers exhibit pro-coal biases, with occasional open bashing of counter perspectives coming from the conservation community or those with differing political views. For instance, a speaker at a NCC event in 2018 remarked, “[I]magine where we would be if we were a year and three months into the Hillary Clinton Administration.”
- In an almost comical example of the pro-coal sentiment of the NCC, the Director of the National Energy Technology Laboratory at the time, Grace Bochenek, led NCC meeting attendees in a “COAL” cheer.

Background:

Under the Trump Administration’s “Energy Dominance” agenda, the NCC’s focus shifted to advocate for the increased use and financial support of coal. Since 2017, it has recommended: [eliminating barriers to coal production on federal lands](#), [extensive subsidization of coal plants in the name of “grid resiliency”](#), [government support and funding for using coal to create a suite of products currently made with other materials](#), and [more generous financial support and tax breaks for coal companies, as well as significant amendments to pollution control regimes like the Clean Air Act](#).

The NCC is composed of two entities: the National Coal Council chartered under FACA, and a 501(c)(6) not-for-profit corporate entity called “NCC, Inc.,” funded by anonymous donors. All of NCC Inc.’s members are appointed members of the federally chartered NCC, and, as one court [found](#), there is “no meaningful distinction between the NCC and NCC, Inc.”

In October 2020, WORC, Democracy Forward and Western Environmental Law Center [sued](#) the Trump administration for violating the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) by refusing to make fully public NCC meetings and records.

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Northern Plains is a grassroots conservation and family agriculture group that organizes Montanans to protect our water quality, family farms and ranches, and unique quality of life.

The Powder River Basin Resource Council, founded in 1973, is a family agriculture and conservation organization in Wyoming. Resource Council members are family farmers and ranchers and concerned citizens who are committed to conservation of our unique land, mineral, water, and clean air resources.

The Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) is a network of eight grassroots organizations in seven Western states with 15,000 members, many of them ranchers and farmers committed to common-sense reform in agriculture, oil and gas development, coal mine reclamation, and rural economic development. Headquartered in Billings, Mont., WORC also has offices in Colorado and Washington, D.C.