

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House of Representatives
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Democratic Whip
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

December 8, 2017

Dear Mr. Speaker, Mr. Leader, Madam Leader, and Congressman Hoyer:

The Appalachian region of our country is one of abundant resources, ranging from precious land and water to lively music and history. For over one hundred years, Appalachian and other coal communities in the United States, have played an integral part in supporting the growth of our country. The industrial revolution was made possible because of the hard work and sacrifices of Appalachian coal miners and their families.

However, the people of Appalachia are now bearing the weight of a significant economic transition. Many Appalachian counties are undergoing serious economic distress as the need for coal mining jobs continues to disappear. In order to realize a more hopeful, sustainable economy, a new economy will need to be born, one that honors Appalachian traditions; empowers people; creates jobs that provide economic dignity; is just and equitable; and preserves and revitalizes God's creation.

As people of faith and faith-based organizations, we are deeply invested in ensuring every person has the opportunity to reach his or her God-given potential. We also believe in our moral responsibility to ensure God's creation continues to help future generations thrive. For these reasons, we urge you to look towards real solutions for a just transition for coal communities. The residents of these communities are in crisis and cannot wait any longer to take concrete steps toward the abundant life God wishes for us all.

The time is now to pass the bipartisan RECLAIM Act of 2017 (H.R. 1731), which has been reported out of the House Natural Resources Committee. RECLAIM is a vital piece of legislation for communities devastated by the economic decline of the coal industry. If RECLAIM Act is passed, it would put to work over five years a total of roughly one billion dollars from the reserve of the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Fund. The AML funds are already collected and ready to use to clean up abandoned coal mines and the lands and waters damaged and polluted by them, as well as to promote economic diversification, targeting the most economically distressed coal communities across the nation.

We respectfully ask you to act on this request and ensure that the RECLAIM Act is brought to the House floor for a vote and passed as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Catholic Committee of Appalachia
Spencer, WV

Christians For The Mountains
Dunmore, WV

Creation Justice Ministries
Washington, DC

Delaware-Maryland Synod ELCA Creation
Care Ministry
Baltimore, MD

Disciples Center for Public Witness
(Christian Church, Disciples of Christ)
Washington, DC

Evangelical Environmental Network
Indianapolis, IN

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Chicago, IL

Faith Action Network - Washington State
Seattle, WA

Faith in Public Life
Washington, DC

Franciscan Action Network
Washington, DC

Friends Committee on National Legislation
Washington, DC

Ignatian Solidarity Network
University Heights, OH

Iowa Interfaith Power & Light
Des Moines, Iowa

Interfaith Power and Light
San Francisco, CA

Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVA)
Washington, DC

Interfaith Worker Justice
Chicago, IL

Islamic Society of North America
Plainfield, IN

Jesuit Conference Office of Justice and
Ecology
Washington, DC

Justice and Witness Ministries, United
Church of Christ
Cleveland, OH

Kentucky Council of Churches
Lexington, KY

National Council of Churches
Washington, DC

National Religious Coalition on Creation
Care
Santa Rosa, CA

North Carolina Interfaith Power & Light
Raleigh, NC

North Carolina Council of Churches
Raleigh, NC

Office of Social Justice, Christian Reformed
Church in North America
Grand Rapids, MI

Ohio Council of Churches
Columbus, OH

Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Harrisburg, PA

Pennsylvania Interfaith Power & Light
State College, PA

Young Evangelicals for Climate Action
New Freedom, PA

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Louisville, KY

Cc: US House of Representatives

Rhode Island Interfaith Power & Light
Riverside, RI

South Carolina Interfaith Power and Light
Greenville, SC

The United Methodist Church - General
Board of Church and Society
Washington, DC

Unitarian Universalist Association
Boston, MA

Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth
Portland, OR

West Virginia Council of Churches
Charleston, West Virginia

West Virginia Interfaith Power and Light
Huntington, WV

Wheaton Franciscans
Wheaton, IL

Wisconsin Council of Churches
Sun Prairie, WI

Wisconsin Interfaith Power and Light
Sun Prairie, WI

Vermont Interfaith Power and Light
Richmond, VT

Virginia Council of Churches
Richmond, Virginia