

Coal Rally Talk

Old King Coal Festival

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West Frankfort, Illinois

By: Leonard Hopkins

Thank you! I am very happy to STAND UP for COAL, especially here in my hometown of West Frankfort. I was born in Miners' Hospital in Christopher and was raised in a home that was supported by coal. My father worked for Old Ben Coal for 37 years, and coal put food on our table and allowed my parents to give all five of their children a good education. I remember reading "The Mine Report" in the Daily American newspaper and finding out the working status of mines like Old Ben #9, #21, #24, #25, and #27; Freeman Mines Orient #3, Orient #4, Orient #6, Fidelity #11, Zeigler #4 & #11, the Classic Mine, and Brushy Creek Mine. All these mines were close to West Frankfort and employed thousands from Southern Illinois.

In those days, the whole town would mourn injuries or loss of life from a mining accident, and the whole town would celebrate their good fortune of having this great mineral during Old King Coal days!! In the days of my youth, coal was king, jobs were plentiful, and almost every business and household burned coal to heat their businesses and homes. (And we had a **lower** incidence of asthma!)

Let me say here that I believe in clean air, clean water, and clean earth. I am an environmentalist, but a practical one. Since the 1970 Clean Air Act, the mining industry and coal-fired power plants have worked hard to control

pollutants from the burning of coal. According to the EPA's own website, since 1980 (**after the first 10 years of reductions from the Clean Air Act**) the United States has decreased emissions of air pollutants by: 71% of the carbon monoxide, 97% of the lead, 52% of nitrogen oxides, 63% of organic compounds, 83% of the particulate (soot), and 69% of the sulfur dioxide. **This is HUGE!!** It is a tribute to industry and regulators alike. Even with all these reductions, and more reductions that are automatic under current regulations, and even though our country is in a recession with budget deficits and high unemployment; over the last 3 years, the current Federal EPA has pushed forward no fewer than 7 MAJOR rules aimed at coal-fired power plants. These rules are: The Cross-State Air Pollution Rule, the Hazardous Air Pollutant rule, new National Ambient Air Quality Standards (that will prompt more rules), Cooling Water Rules, Coal Ash Rules, Clean Water Effluent Rules, and, the knock out punch for coal, Greenhouse Gas Rules. When tighter rules from MSHA, Dept. of Natural Resources, and Corps of Engineers are added on top of EPA's rules, it is easy to see we are heading for a TRAIN WRECK of POWER SHORTAGES & cost increases of 30 – 50% for electricity.

Fortunately, we were recently able to vacate EPA's Cross-State Air Pollution Rule. This rule was aimed at controlling additional SO₂ and NO_x in 27 eastern U.S. states. The rule would have basically required coal-fired power plants to buy low sulfur coal AND scrub it, or shut down! Arguing before the federal court to vacate the rule were the states of Texas, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Virginia, and Wisconsin. Did you notice a state that is missing? Of interest to us here in the mining area

of Illinois, our attorney general (Lisa Madigan), representing the coal mining state of Illinois, intervened **in favor of EPA** and their Cross State Rule that would decimate the coal industry in Southern Illinois.

With the drop in the domestic coal market over the last few years, the Illinois Coal industry has responded by increasing their exports overseas. However, is shipping our country's cheapest, most plentiful form of energy to overseas manufacturers good public policy? Do we want to see overseas factories make use of this cheap energy to produce products at a price that drives U.S. industry out of business, thus losing more jobs here at home? **NOW** is the time to **REQUIRE** our elected officials to control EPA & the other job-killing bureaucrats, so the United States can prosper once more!