

My name is Michelle Edwards. I work for Cloud Peak Energy. I wasn't intending to speak today. So I don't have a glitzy speech ready. Rather, I'll speak from my heart. I'm a West Coaster. I was born and raised in Washington state. I've only lived here for nine-and-a-half years. I grew up fishing the same creeks, rivers and Pacific Ocean that people before me spoke about. My family's history is rooted deeply in energy production. In the early '70s, my grandpa built a coal-fired power plant in Centralia, Washington, and worked there until his retirement. My dad, who was a millwright, frequently worked shutdowns at that power plant until he too retired. And I worked at the adjacent coal mines that fed the power plant and until the abrupt closure four days after Thanksgiving in 2006 that put both myself and 700 fellow coal miners out of work. Through a prior leap of faith, I decided to move myself and my family to Wyoming. I am not here to reminisce about the good old days, but rather to speak from firsthand experience. I have seen the firsthand devastation of communities that are affected by a single mine closure. Today I have heard the words "transition" and "charting new paths." I wanted -- those are the same words that we heard spoken by government leaders in Washington state when the mine closed out there. Although the unemployment rate has gone down in the counties that surround the mine that I used to work at, it's not a one-to-one ratio. I have many former coworkers and friends who have been and are continuing to work two or three jobs that pay \$10 to \$15 an hour with no benefits. The educational system here in Wyoming is one many of us take for granted, but I'm still amazed at it, coming from Washington state. As a parent volunteer at my son's school in Washington, it was very common to walk through the halls avoiding buckets because the facilities were so aged. I was an active member on both the bond and maintenance budget committees in Washington. Those failed multiple times, and because of that, bussing was severely cut, forcing small children including my eight-year old son to walk long distances just to the nearest bus stop. School sports and activities were either eliminated or pay-to-play costs were so high that they were prohibitive to many families. My boys have been raised here for the last nine-and-a-half years. My oldest son is a teacher in Wyoming now. My youngest just graduated two days ago. They've been blessed to receive an exceptional education and opportunity because of

the revenue that the mineral industry provides here. I've heard comments today that coal companies only care about shareholders, but I beg to differ. I've seen firsthand in my work for a company that provides support for multiple different agencies.