

Hello. My name is Kasie Pickens, and I work for Arch Coal. I've been in the coal industry for 17 years. Most importantly, I'm a wife and mother of two young girls. So last night I was going over these comments with my oldest, ten-year-old and asked her how I did. She said, "Well, you did better than probably I would." So we'll see how it goes. So last summer elected leaders and thousands of the public expressed their support of coal production on the federal lands through comment and participation in regional meetings. Despite overwhelming evidence that to improve return for taxpayers requires increasing incentives to mine coal, the administration's response was to put a moratorium on the coal leasing program, relying on the arguments of the so-called green groups that want no return for the taxpayer by keeping it in the ground. These discussions have been around "What's fair for the taxpayer?" Well, I'm here to advocate that there is a federal act that needs to be reformed, but it's not the Federal Coal Leasing Act. It's the Equal Access to Justice Act. See, the environmental nonprofits, environmental groups have hijacked this act, and they're bilking American taxpayers out of millions of dollars in order to pad their own pockets. See, this was a well-meaning act that allowed the little guy to stand up to the federal government and have attorneys' fees and litigation costs reimbursed to them. The environmental groups have hijacked this. They get all of their attorneys' fees and litigation costs reimbursed every time they sue the federal agencies. So they are bilking the American taxpayers for a cause that is lowering the standard of living for millions of hard-working American families by killing coal and raising electricity prices. So every time they sue over a new permit being issued, the American taxpayer foots the bill. Every time they sue another government entity for not enforcing its own laws, they get reimbursed by the American taxpayer. It seems to me that the green they seek has less to do with the environment and more to do with the almighty dollar, all of which is taken off the backs of the American taxpayer.