

MR. LUKE: Hi. My name is Forrest Luke. I'm a resident of Craig, Colorado. You've heard, and will hear, from many more commentators today that the BLM proposal to evaluate royalty rates and coal is not really about making sure that American citizens receive a fair return on coal resources on Federal lands. When Bonus bids, severance taxes, and other fees are factored in with the existing 12.5 percent royalty rate, coal removed from Federal lands is already taxed at a staggering effective rate of 39 percent. Tell me that's not paying our fair share. The real and very thinly disguised BLM DOI agency is to place another nail in the coffin of the U.S. coal industry for reasons that make [indiscernible] no sense from either an economic or an environmental standpoint. Raising royalty rates to the point that the economic playing field is tilted against coal will not increase revenues available, to assist Colorado communities or our school children. Quite to the contrary, the revenue stream will dry up as cooperation cease. And Colorado coal field communities are forced to suffer the associated devastation. This is not pie-in-the-sky rhetoric. Take a look at the loss in the coalfield communities of Delta, Moffat, and Rio Blanco Counties. How do you think the families of laid-off miners in these communities are coping? They're upside down with mortgage payments. Their dreams of sending their children to college have evaporated. They are wondering how they will put food on the table with no check coming in. They don't even want to hear anymore Federal Government promises about throwing token guilt money or retraining programs for displaced coal miners. We see how well that is working in Appalachia. Coal miners in Colorado are part of the fabric of the communities we live in. Most of us in the coal industry have lived in our communities for decades. We are community leaders, and we volunteer our times and resources with organizations within our communities and beyond. Just as within the small circles of individuals that I work with everyday, we have a local hospital Chair, a member of a BLM Resource Advisory Council, a member of the Colorado [indiscernible] Reclamation Board, the Chair of the local Special Olympics, an Addiction Recovery Counselor, a Scout Leader, and members of various community planning and service organizations. The list goes on. I'm very concerned that the fabric of that -- of those -- that this fabric will be rent apart as EPA, DOI, and other Federal agencies, along with

their NGO allies, continue their assault on the coal industry. I hope you will ask yourselves if the myopic energy policy vision of the current administration is worth all the pain that coal communities, minorities, senior citizens on fixed incomes, and in fact, the American economy when compared against the very to non-existent environmental return that may or may not occur in the decades to come. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.