

JACK PRATT: Hello. My name is Jack Pratt, Jr. I live in Tucker's Crossroads, Tennessee. That is about two hours west of here in Wilson County. I'm the grandson of a sharecropper, a third generation farmer, and a native Tennessean, who is also a sitting local elected official. I want to thank you today for holding this public meeting. As someone who holds a public office, I understand the importance of hearing from a variety of constituencies as you weigh important decisions. In my work, I'm responsible for assessing the value of commercial and personal property, which is valued at approximately \$3 billion in my jurisdiction. The taxes collected from this property help fund our schools, our roads, and essential emergency services. I understand how important it is that the government get its fair share of taxes. You are responsible for insuring that the government receives its fair share of royalty rates for coal on public lands. Only as a taxpayer, that the coal rights are routinely sold for less than a cup of coffee, according to a recent fair share score card published by the Center for American Progress. I hope that this review of the Federal Coal Program will ensure the federal government will receive a fair return for the leasing and development of our publicly owned resources. I also am very concerned about the recent news of coal company bankruptcies. Top executives at one company unveiled a plan to give over \$11 million in bonuses to senior executives while (Inaudible) and worker benefits. Alfa Coal also proposed to eliminate health insurance, disability, and other benefits for mine workers. Frankly, mine workers deserve better. You know, there is everything that they have worked their whole life for. And, finally, because coal companies had the ability to self-bond or self-insure, the government and taxpayers will be left with the bill. If all of the four U.S. coal companies go under, taxpayers will be left with a \$2 billion to \$3 billion -- that's with a "B" -- price tag to clean up the reclamation and the abandoned mines. How would this fare to taxpayers? Every American has to have car insurance to drive a car. Why shouldn't the coal companies have to be insured the same way? Now, I know you came to Knoxville today to hold a hearing in a TVA region, but I would like to think you came here to learn a little bit from a country music classic by John Prine called Paradise. The song, as you may well know, is about a town not far from here called Paradise. The town was wiped away by strip mining. Now, I close my remarks by quoting the chorus here: "And, Daddy, won't you take me back to Newlinburg County down by the Green River where Paradise lays? Well, I'm sorry, my son, but you are too late in asking. Mr. Peabody's coal trains hauled it away." Don't let the coal trains haul away our future in our other Paradises in this country. Thank you very much.