

Oral Comments 5/26/16

Knoxville Scoping

Bill Dardon, field representative for Representative Rowe, First District, Tennessee

BILL DARGON: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to East Tennessee. I'm Bill Dardon. I represent Congressman Phil Rowe in our district. It is just east of here. And our district adjoins Congressman Griffith's district right at the Tennessee/Virginia state line.

I'm here on behalf of United States Congressman Phil Rowe, and I appreciate the BLM taking time to conduct these public hearings to determine appropriate scoping for their review of the Federal Coal Leasing Program.

I want to begin by saying that Congressman Rowe believes that the review is unnecessary because the program is working well and providing a fair return to the taxpayers, both at the state and federal levels.

To give you a sense of whether the program is giving a fair return, all you need to do is look at what has happened in the communities where coal producers have pulled out and stopped mining. There is widespread economic devastation, and federal agencies crafting these policies don't seem to care.

As you conduct these public hearings, it is our sincere hope that you will take the time to actually hear what the supporters of reliable and affordable power generation are saying.

We have been through an extraordinary period of energy exploration in recent years and the natural gas boom and our ability to extract coal and oil from shale -- I'm sorry -- and our ability to extract oil from shale has led to lower prices, but we all know that energy is cyclical.

If we leverage our future ability to compete with other countries by implementing short-sighted policies that are driven less by science than by ideology, our children and grandchildren won't look kindly on our decisions.

On behalf of Congressman Phil Rowe, thank you for allowing me to say a few words.