

MS. SLABAKOV: Hello. My name is Yana Slabakov. And I have lived in Colorado almost my whole life. Colorado and its natural lands have always been special to me because this is where I grew up. That's why I'm so glad to be here today with the Climate Reality Project to advocate for making the moratorium on coal leasing on public lands permanent. Coal has had a pivotal role in providing jobs and a livelihood for generations of Colorado residents. That being said, the coal industry faces a bleak and inevitable future. The energy sector is slowly, but surly, making the transition from carbon intensive extractions to cleaner energy, which is, in turn, becoming less expensive to produce and implement. In January burning coal for electricity hit an all-time low, counting for only 27 percent of U.S. electricity production. Many regions have begun responding to the impacts of the declining opportunities in the coal industry. With the a permanent ban on further coal leasing, attention can be refocused on providing communities with the resources that are necessary to make the shift away from coal. Coal mining areas are also the hardest hit by another reality -- health impacts. These external costs are great. And coal miners and their communities often pay for them with their wellbeing. Coal is harmful to the human body at every stage of its production cycle. The American Lung Association estimates that 13,000 premature deaths occur each year from coal pollution. And this pollution is a major contributor to chronic respiratory diseases, heart disease, stroke, and cancer. Those who mine coal themselves take on the biggest dangers associated. But, it certainly doesn't end there. Mining operations spew water contaminated with mercury, sulfur oxides, and heavy metal, which finds its way into local water supplies and into the aquatic food chain. This acid mine drainage, coupled with mine chemicals that are often improperly injected underground, spread an unforeseen and uncontained wave. At its core, this is a public health problem. Not only miners are affected. The consequences of coal combustion impacts us all. Associated air pollutants, such as mercury, sulfur dioxide, and particulate matter contribute to growing rates of asthma, lung disease, and nervous system impairment. High mercury concentrations in water have a left more and more children being born with low birth weights and blood mercury levels high enough to impact IQ. The gravity of this issue cannot be understated. And of

course, because coal is such a powerful contributor to global warming, we all feel the effects. It is time for form irresponsible [indiscernible] driven energy policy. When public land is given up for lease to coal companies, it is our health and our climate that is being given away. The BLM has a valuable opportunity to change the narrative on the way the United States approaches energy production. Investing in coal is not a safe or economically resilient way forward. The environmental and health impacts are too heavy a price to pay. And we all deserve better. Thank you.