

MR. WILLETT: Thank you all for being here. I'm Yeulin Willett, State Representative, House District 54, which is all of Mesa County, except for the City of Grand Junction and about half of Delta County.

I grew up in Delta. I spent a lot of time with friends and family that were coal miners. I married a girl from Steamboat, worked in Routt County, helped pave some roads up there to the mines and, and see the benefit of a multifaceted economy on the West Slope.

The Commissioners have already said a lot that I was going to say. So, I'll try to keep it focused maybe on the State, State interest level -- State of Colorado and a little bit to deal with the local and legal issues.

You know I attended a presentation by our Chief Medical Officer in this State, Dr. Wolk. And he asked people what is the most important thing for health to our public? Education? Environment? Nutrition?

People were raising their hands. None of those.

It was a job. That's the most important thing for health. People can feed their families. They can take their kids to the doctor. They can eat good foods.

You know it is -- there's a certain amount of arrogance I think we need to avoid. We know of diversification and the importance of diversifying our economy, of diversifying our own individual investments.

Why in the world, as the Commissioner said, we would be not pursuing nuclear and hydro, abandoning fossil, coal, and oil? We don't know if we're going to have another summer or winter from volcanic activity. Do the research on Yellowstone not too far from here.

There goes your solar. We don't know what the long term affects of huge solar arrays are or wind turbines. We don't know the economic viability.

Fourteen authors just wrote a book that said it's not viable now and won't be in the future. Why in the world would we abandon such a tried and true resource?

As an Attorney for 35 years, I've done my battle with the Federal Government. I've also done work with the Federal Government in helping develop a lot of the mountain bike trails in this valley.

I've seen a disturbing shift, however. The law doesn't change. American unfortunately has become driven by bureaucracies and bureaucratic interpretation, and no offense, but bureaucrats. From things like a pro-bicycle race over the

monument that once was allowed and is not to being able to ride on and access, through Jeeps and four-wheelers, existing access versus designated access. It's a slow shift with no laws from your elected officials.

Now, is that just me saying that? Look at the recent Court Opinions [indiscernible] tracking, immigration. Strike down, strike down, strike down. Thank goodness the Supreme Court, recognizing the limits on the Executive and the bureaucratic branches of government.

There's a thing called the 10th Amendment. There are good historical, logical, and legal arguments that these Federal lands should be Colorado's.

Now, for a number of reasons, I'm not sure I'm ready to get on that bandwagon, such as [indiscernible], Nevada. I think they had a stronger argument for a variety of reasons.

But, if the Federal Government is going to give all the lands back to the States, east of the Mississippi, but they're going to withhold the lands with valuable resources under them, then at the very minimum, the very minimum, they need to consider the voices of the locals, the Counties, the State officials. They should be equal partners.

It should not be a top-down driven system. And that is no more true than with this issue of coal. And I would ask -- and I echo the comments. I don't think it's the State or the Regional people that can do much, sadly.

I have fought these battles. It comes from Washington, D.C. down. Thank you for being here. Let your voices be heard. Be respectful. And thank you for hearing me. MR. ROEBER: Good morning. I'm Mark Roeber, Delta County Commissioner. And I want to thank BLM for holding in coal country rather than in Denver. I think that's a big plus, you know, here for people that are more directly affected.

In saying that, of all the people you hear from today, as was previously stated, Delta County is probably the most affected by the down turn in coal. Our economy is based on agriculture, coal mining, and tourism.

We're 57 percent Federal land. So, whatever the BLM, Forest Service, does has a direct impact on our economy. Historically, as was previously stated, Delta County had 1200 jobs in the coal mining industry in 2012.

We're down to about 250 now. That's a 42 percent decrease in four years, and our communities are suffering. We -- with a 42 percent decrease, if you relate that to jobs

in the Denver area based on population, you'd be looking at 31,000 jobs.

That would get national attention. And we ask that Delta County be considered with our job loss, that we be taken seriously.

We -- you know it's not just our direct job mining losses. Losses to our schools, our communities. We're losing nurses out of the hospital as husbands have lost jobs in the mine. That affects all of our economy, all of our people, and the services they provide.

We're losing the kids out of the schools. Our school district is looking at consolidation, closing the school.

We aren't sure where we're going to go there. And the other thing we lose is volunteers out of those schools. These mining families were the salt of our community. They were the ones that supplied the coaches for little kids, supplied our 4-H leaders. It's a, it's a total hit to our whole community.

So, in the, in these hearings, I would hope that you take into account trying to stabilize some of the coal mining industry. And when you look at return to the taxpayer, you also have to look at what the economies of these communities that are affected depend on. We support all forms of energy in Delta County. We support renewable. But, we know that coal is going to be a part of that mix. And we ask that we continue to be in the mix. We've got clean coal in Delta County, and that needs to be taken into consideration when you go through this EIS.

So, going forward, just take into account that you need to listen to the communities that are directly affected. As was previously stated, we know your hands are not the ones that are making the decision.

But, whatever pressure you can put on to help turn the tide, we would appreciate. And we will always be there to provide input. And we ask that you listen to us. Thank you.