

AIMEE ERICKSON: Thank you. Does this mean I can speak longer since I'm the next to the last person? I was just checking. My name is Aimee Erickson. I'm the Executive Director of Citizens Coal Council, a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to inform, empower and work for and with communities affected by mining, processing and use of coal. While many activists and organizations will make strong, well-documented cases for problematic, fiscal aspects of coal leasing, I believe that there is critical opportunity at this very moment for the United States government to make its position clear: We are taking real, measurable steps to stem the momentum of climate change. Even though the coal industry has seen a significant decline over the last decade, we can't ignore the reality of the United States is the fourth largest source of coal exports in the world. Of those exports, the majority of our coal is headed to Asia. Joby Warrick in a Washington Post article put it most aptly: "Each shipment highlights what critics describe as a hypocrisy, underlining U.S. climate policy: While boasting of pollution cuts at home, the United States is facilitating the sale of large quantities of government-owned coal abroad." To make it abundantly clear, continuing the mining and export of government owned coal is making a statement to the world where our priorities lie and most importantly it goes against President Obama's Climate Action Plan. By the Bureau of Land Management not taking into account the effects of coal exports on global warming, you are undermining global efforts to address climate change. In yesterday's USA Today article on the West Virginia floods, it stated that climate change may have added to this disaster. According to the National Climate Assessment, the part of the U.S. that includes West Virginia has seen a 71 percent increase in extreme precipitation since 1958. We are exporting our pollution and that pollution is not only still contributing to global climate change, but its local effects are impacting poor and vulnerable populations. Now is the time to take a serious stance on climate change and protect the most vulnerable. This is a real, substantial thing we can do to not only show that our humanity takes precedence over our concern for money, but to increase the possibility that our world will be a livable place for future generations.