Jeremiah Armstrong

In 2008, when our current president was running, he stated to the San Francisco Chronicle, responding to a question about his cap-and-trade plan, *"If somebody wants to build a coal-fired power plant, they can. It's just that it will bankrupt them,"* Furthermore, he said: *"Under my plan ... electricity rates would necessarily skyrocket....[W]hatever the plants were, whatever the industry was, they would have to retrofit their operations. That will cost money. They will pass that money onto consumers."* I don't think any of us here today are naïve enough to believe that this action by the BLM, as directed by Secretary Jewell, is anything but another dose of the bureaucratic poison that the current administration is feeding our economy.

The current effective tax rate on each ton of federal coal mined is 39% of GROSS, including royalties, bonus bids, AML tax and black lung tax. In a time when we've seen nearly all of the publicly traded coal companies file for bankruptcy in the face of an onslaught of onerous environmental litigation and regulation from the federal bureaucratic leviathan, which has driven up costs and driven down demand for coal, it is absolutely deceitful for the Interior Department to suggest that coal companies are not paying enough, or that the taxpayers are not receiving a return on their resources. Even without the nearly 40% tax rate, the affordable energy that the poorest among us enjoys is a tremendous benefit to our local, state and national economy. I would suggest that along with the impacts of burning coal on the environment, the positive cumulative impacts for all who utilize electricity for work and leisure be analyzed. Affordable energy is the backbone of our economy, but our current president, does not seem concerned about the citizens of this nation. Rather, he seems much more interested in maintaining the incestuous relationship between big-government and the environmental lobby at the expense of those least able to bear it.

As the federal employees in this room know, the end of a federal fiscal year is a time of uncertainty for agency budgets. Little spending or planning is done at this time, especially if a new federal budget or continuing resolution has not yet been passed. Imagine, if you can, working in the private sector, where you actually have to produce a product to get paid, and trying to plan for years in advance with the uncertainty of what will or will not be permitted by your federal bureaucratic overlords in their extended rulemaking process. In short, much of what may have been invested will likely go undeveloped. Wealth and prosperity will be "kept in the ground" for those that rely on it, and the poorest among us (those on fixed incomes, etc) will have to decide between keeping the lights on, and buying food, medicine, etc. Expedite the PEIS process