

**Testimony of Senator David G. Argall (R-Schuylkill/Berks)  
Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection  
Clean Power Plan Listening Session  
October 28, 2015 | 6:00 p.m.  
Penn State Schuylkill  
200 University Drive  
Schuylkill Haven, PA 17972**

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Thank you Secretary Quigley for holding these statewide listening sessions on the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Power Plan. I'd like to welcome you all to Schuylkill County – the heart of the anthracite coal industry.

The anthracite coal industry transformed this region spanning over three centuries. Anthracite coal was discovered in Schuylkill County in 1790, 15 years after the first discovery in Pittston, Pennsylvania.

Over the next several decades, the industry adapted and dealt with growing pains. In 1869, the Pennsylvania Department of Mines was established to regulate and oversee the growth of the industry and the safety of its workers.

During the 1800s and early 1900s, Schuylkill County led the way for anthracite mining in the United States.

Population growth follows employment opportunities. It explains why the county's population ballooned from 90,000 in 1860 to more than 235,000 in the 1930s as a result of the rapid growth in the anthracite industry. At that time, sales of Pennsylvania anthracite reached 100 million tons annually.

Today, only two million tons of Pennsylvania anthracite coal is sold annually. You can still see that 98 percent decline in our downtowns, and in our neighborhoods, all across much of Schuylkill County.

As you drive through our communities – from Coaldale and Tamaqua in the east end of the county, to Mahanoy City and Shenandoah, to Ashland, Minersville and Gordon – you can also see the physical scars left behind due to the decline of the industry. Shenandoah, for example, lost 80 percent of its population over the last century, declining from 25,774 in 1910 to less than 5,000 today. At one point, the City of Pottsville hosted a team in the National Football League, the Pottsville Maroons, until 1929. The population in Pottsville has declined by more than 40 percent since the Maroons played in the NFL.

My hometown of Tamaqua once housed 13,000 residents in 1930. Today it is now only home to 7,000 residents. When you have that many vacant properties, blight, abandonment and urban decay becomes a major challenge for many of our municipalities.

Since the 1940s, the county's population has declined by nearly 90,000 residents. It has only been in the last 10 years that the industry has started to show signs of recovery.

In June, the Pennsylvania Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, at my request, held a public hearing in Pottsville to learn about the struggles confronting the anthracite industry.

Due to the increasing domestic regulatory climate on the industry coupled with unfair dumping from foreign countries, Pennsylvania anthracite coal is at a significant competitive disadvantage.

Nationally, 35 percent of electricity generation is derived from coal, down from 50 percent several years ago.

It has become clear that the industry is adapting to meet today's regulatory environment, however, additional burdens will only hurt – not help – the progress that has been made.

I'd like to point out that this is not a simple issue of the coal industry versus the environmentalists. Coal and environmental stewardship can coexist. I'm pleased to note local cooperation between the industry and the Schuylkill Conservation District. I recently received a letter from the Conservation District noting their support for tax credits for coal refuse-to-electricity.

Here is a direct quote from their letter: "Scars of legacy coal mining are evident throughout the landscape of Schuylkill County and the coal refuse-to-electricity industry plays a vital role in the reclamation of abandoned coal refuse piles at no cost to minimal cost to Pennsylvania taxpayers."

Communities in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia are now beginning to experience what Schuylkill County has experienced over the last 100 years – a major decline in an industry due to a variety of factors including unfair and unregulated foreign competition, costly regulations and the rise of other energy sources. It's indicative when almost half of the states are suing the EPA over the Clean Power Plan.

As a student of history, I'm well-aware of the mistakes made here in the past – both by government and the coal industry. There have been major, negative impacts, however, let's not forget that Pennsylvania's coal fueled a large part of the Industrial Revolution and the industrial efforts which helped to win two world wars.

Coal mining and environmental reclamation should go hand-in-hand.

We never expect to witness a return to the anthracite coal production peak years which occurred 100 years ago. We certainly do not want to return to the unemployment rate of 25 percent which this county suffered in the 1950s, due to the rise of affordable foreign and domestic oil following World War II.

Don't let progress be hampered by unfunded mandates and regulations that will only cripple progress and hamper a future for the industry in Schuylkill County. Unfair competition overseas makes this a recipe for disaster. And please, please do not make the same bureaucratic mistake we've seen made countless times in Washington. Anthracite coal and bituminous coal are not the same. Do not make them subject to identical rules.

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At our public hearing in Pottsville, Reading Anthracite President Brian Rich summed it up when he said the United States has a war on coal while other countries have a war for coal. As one local resident astutely noted that the same was true for the domestic textile industry.

That industry once employed thousands of local residents, but is now just a fraction of its peak.

Let's not make the same mistake again.

Remember, our environment is very important to us. But so are good-paying, local jobs. Please help us to protect both.

Thank you.