

July 12, 2009

To the Honorable Senator Mark Warner and the Honorable Senator Jim Webb

Dear Honorable Senators Webb and Warner:

As a resident of Tazewell County Virginia and a member of the Tazewell County Board of Supervisors elected to represent the Southern District of Tazewell County, I am writing to request your help on a matter of extreme importance to me and to many of the citizens I represent.

Very soon the House of Representatives will send to the United States Senate a “Cap and Trade” energy bill designed to address climate change and endorse issues that would devastate the economy of Tazewell County and the surrounding area. This “Cap and Trade” energy legislation would destroy almost 70,000 high-wage coal-mining jobs, dramatically increase individual consumer energy bills, and damage the coal industry by limiting its global economic competitiveness while achieving minor and insignificant improvement to the environment.

You both visited our county several times during your election campaign visits and I know from our discussions that neither of you want to hurt Tazewell County residents. I respectfully request that you hold precious the economic viability of my constituents and that you regard and review the consequences to my people as the Senate considers how best to address climate change. This “Cap and Trade” energy issue is harmful in its present form and unless substantial changes are forthcoming, I urge you to reject this legislation and any legislation similar to the Waxman-Markey “American Clean Energy and Security Act” (H.R. 2454).

Despite recent changes designed to reduce the bill’s harmful economic consequences, this bill still fails to produce a balanced and responsible policy for addressing climate change issues. My people deserve legislation that is reasonable, responsible, exemplifies a thoughtful approach to climate change issues, and fulfills a Federal Energy Policy that enhances existing business and economic stability. As H.R. 2454 is written and the base motive for its passage, it is designed to change the national base for economic activity which is a death knell for this area.

If this bill becomes law:

- Nearly 70,000 high-wage mining jobs could be lost by 2020; many of these will be Tazewell County residents and my constituents.
- Electricity prices could more than double, burdening area businesses and families with unreasonable costly energy bills. Appalachian Power Company customers have already seen two years of double-digit increase in electric bills and my constituents are chafing under the burden of these already oppressive monthly electrical bills.

- The replacement of fossil fuels as the source of electricity to businesses and consumers would cause increased utility expense and devastate our fragile economy. This House of Representative passed legislation would play havoc with actively employed miners and business entrepreneur economic expectations because of political restriction, which is designed to reduce normal fossil fuel industrial use and growth.

This “Cap and Trade” legislation would affect our local government in a negative manner with loss of tax base income due to a destabilized economic structure. Tazewell County has a large number of retired miners and this bill would interrupt normal business enterprise causing an appreciable number of employers to go bankrupt leaving retirees without pensions and healthcare benefits. The loss of our fossil fuel based economy would cause a consequential necessity for individual economic and social help. This would place more financial strain on the public sector to underwrite broadened costly social programs.

Tazewell County has been vigorously working over several years to diversify our employment base and to create an environmental friendly green employment and business zone. Unfortunately, the recent economic downturn has slowed our progress toward this needed diversification .Our local initiatives and desire for a more environmental friendly economic enterprises have borne fruit. Independent of our coal economic base and no matter what we do in creating and recruiting new industry we will never be able to survive economically with the particulars in this “Cap and Trade” National Energy Policy that causes the elimination of coal as the base fuel for most of electricity generation.

There are benefits from responsible environmental improvement with non-destructive economic actions such as:

1. Cost containment measures, such as a “safety valve” and unrestricted offsets to protect against spikes in energy costs that will drive business and jobs overseas,
2. Sufficient, reliable and timely funding and incentives to accelerate the development, demonstration and broad commercial deployment of advanced coal technologies such as carbon capture and storage ,and
3. A comprehensive legal framework governing carbon capture and storage liability in order to provide the certainty needed to attract investment in new clean coal technologies.

I urge you to vote against the current “Cap and Trade” legislation that would devalue our economy and ask that you pursue a course of legislation that would regard and safeguard the economic future for the residents of Tazewell County.

Sincerely,

Mike Hymes
Tazewell County, Virginia