

Letters: Mountaintop removal destruction for profit

Staff Reports

Thursday, May 26, 2011

In an effort to re-establish the intent of the Clean Water Act of 1972 and curtail the use of mountaintop removal (MTR), I attended a House subcommittee meeting on May 5. U.S. Rep. John Duncan Jr., sits on the committee, which was chaired by U.S. Rep. Bob Gibbs of Ohio. This subcommittee (meeting) was entitled "EPA Mining Policies: Assault on Appalachian Jobs," which could lead some to assume that the protection of drinking water from the toxic waste as a result of MTR is costing jobs. When, in fact, MTR is designed from the start to lower labor cost, thus cut jobs. This, while production has increased and profits have skyrocketed.

On May 11, this committee reconvened and it was much the same as seen a week before. Of the nine witnesses asked to testify during these meetings, eight had some financial interest in keeping MTR from oversight. Most disturbing was that none of the witnesses were from communities impacted by MTR. Not one person whose family has a proud history of coal miners in their lineage was asked to tell why they are no longer working. No one from these communities was asked to share about the clusters of autism, cancers and low-birth-weight babies found in their towns. All ailments, which in these cases, have been shown to have correlations to this form of mining.

Gibbs called this a "balanced" panel of witnesses, though some of the largest contributors to his campaign were on the panels. Duncan talks of helping constituents, however there are no MTR mines in his district and some of his biggest contributors are involved in MTR. We all pay for this selfishness in the form of subsidies, health care and the human heritage destroyed for profit.

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