



KENTUCKY

**MITCH McCONNELL**  
U.S. SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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## **A Threat to Coal-Mining Businesses in Kentucky**

*The EPA's "attack on an important Kentucky industry hampers the growth of jobs"*

**Washington, DC** – U.S. Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell released a statement Thursday regarding a Senate Environment and Public Works Committee (EPW) Minority staff report, which claims the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) coal-mining permit approval process is having a negative impact on coal-mining jobs in Kentucky.

"The EPA has turned the Section 404 permitting process, already a cumbersome process to begin with, into an illegitimate, back-door means of shutting down Kentucky coal mines. This is outside the scope of their authority and the law. It represents a fundamental departure from the permitting process as originally envisioned by Congress," McConnell said.

"This Senate needs to make it clear to the EPA that they must complete the permit review process in a timely manner, and provide complete transparency along the way to all sides. They cannot continue to impose a back-door ban on mining operations in Kentucky through an illegitimate process," McConnell added.

The EPW Committee Minority report estimates that roughly 3,500 mining jobs in Kentucky could be in jeopardy if the EPA doesn't revise its permit approval process.

"Coal is a vital part of my State's economy, and a vital part of America's energy portfolio," McConnell said. "The EPA's attack on this important Kentucky industry hampers the growth of jobs, and it especially hampers the growth of small business – the greatest engines of job creation."

*The full text of Senator McConnell's statement is below:*

"I rise to sound an alarm about a threat to coal-mining businesses in Kentucky. Coal is a vital part of my State's economy, and a vital part of America's energy portfolio. The coal industry creates over 60,000 jobs in Kentucky, including approximately 15,000 coal miners. More than half the country's electricity is generated by coal, electricity those workers help generate.

“But this important sector of the economy now faces a back-door attempt to restrict coal mining, one that was implemented without a hearing or a vote by this administration’s Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA is overstepping its authority by using an approval process meant to assess the environmental impact of mining operations as a means to halt those mining operations altogether.

“According to one study by the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, it could be estimated that roughly 3,500 mining jobs in Kentucky are in jeopardy if the EPA does not let go its stranglehold on the growth of that industry. And mining industry jobs are not the only jobs lost thanks to this wrongheaded, bureaucratic over-regulation. For every coal-mining job, 11 other jobs are dependent on it. That means up to 38,500 jobs in my State alone could be affected.

“Let me give a concrete example of how what the EPA is doing directly affects jobs. Out of 49 Kentucky applicants for permits under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, only one application—that’s right, one—is actually under review. One out of 49. Actually, that should be one out of 42, Mr. President, because seven applicants were kept waiting so long by the EPA’s foot-dragging tactic that they had no choice but to withdraw their applications.

“After all, during this whole length of time that the EPA unfairly prolongs the process, mine operators must still spend resources to keep their mines ready to operate. Eventually paying these costs while earning no profit in return forces many of these businesses to just give up.

“While the rest of the permits are technically pending a review, Mr. President, in reality, they are in limbo and essentially dead as long as the EPA refuses to even begin its official review process. This “run out the clock” tactic is bad news for Kentucky’s economy.

“I know I don’t have to tell my colleagues we are in a recession. Unemployment is higher than any of us would like it to be. In Kentucky it is 10.5 percent, higher than the national average. My highest priority as the Senator from Kentucky is to help everyone from my State who wants a job to find one.

“That’s why I must speak out against what the EPA is doing. Their attack on an important Kentucky industry hampers the growth of jobs, and it especially hampers the growth of small businesses—the greatest engines of job creation.

“The EPA has turned the Section 404 permitting process, already a cumbersome process to begin with, into an illegitimate, back-door means of shutting down Kentucky coal mines. This is outside the scope of their authority and the law. It represents a fundamental departure from the permitting process as originally envisioned by Congress.

“This Senate needs to make it clear to the EPA that they must complete the permit review process in a timely manner, and provide complete transparency along the way to all sides.

They cannot continue to impose a back-door ban on mining operations in Kentucky through an illegitimate process.

“Let me add one more thing. The Section 404 permit review process is only one aspect of the EPA’s war on coal. They are also seeking to impose a back-door national energy tax by regulating carbon dioxide emissions from coal plants under the Clean Air Act, which will hurt our economy and endanger millions of jobs across the country. The Senate will have an opportunity to vote on the EPA’s actions in that regard in the near future.”