

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

June 11, 2009

Dear Colleague:

We invite you to join us in cosponsoring S. 696, The Appalachian Restoration Act. This legislation would ban the practice of mountaintop removal coal mining operations and their associated valley fills. Mountaintop removal is an environmentally destructive method of coal mining in which the summits of mountains are removed to expose the coal seams beneath. The process results in the dumping of millions of tons of waste rock, dirt and vegetation into nearby streams and river valleys. More than 1 million acres of Appalachia have already been affected by this process. An estimated 1,200 miles of headwater streams have been buried under tons of mining wastes. More than 500 mountains have been impacted. Homes have been ruined and drinking water supplies contaminated.

Our bill, S. 696, the Appalachia Restoration Act, would make clear that coal mining wastes cannot be dumped into our streams, smothering them and sending plumes of toxic run-off into surface and groundwater systems. The Cardin-Alexander legislation would achieve this by amending the Clean Water Act, specifically preventing the so-called "excess spoil" of coal mining wastes from entering our streams and rivers. This simple legislation, consistent with the Clean Water Act's original purpose, would stop the wholesale destruction of some of America's most beautiful and ecologically significant regions.

Mountaintop removal mining produces less than five percent of the coal mined in the United States. This bill would not ban other methods of coal mining. Instead, it is narrowly tailored to stop a practice that has earned the condemnation of communities across Appalachia as well as citizens across the rest of the country. To add your name to the list of cosponsors, please have your staff contact Josh Klein (josh_klein@cardin.senate.gov) of Senator Cardin's staff or Curtis Swager (curtis_swager@alexander.senate.gov) of Senator Alexander's staff.

Sincerely,



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Lamar Alexander
United States Senator