

Mr. Chairman, I thank my colleague, the ranking member on the committee.

This Republican-led House has already cast 302--soon to be more--anti-environmental votes in this Congress. In our last week in session before the election in November, our eighth day in session since the beginning of August, the majority now wants to use this precious time when we should be dealing with the Nation's economic problems. Instead, we are planning to consider legislation on the floor that will add to this total of anti-environmental votes.

No, there is no war on coal, not by the Obama administration or anyone else. Mr. *Markey* has explained the market forces at work. But there clearly has been a concerted effort. One out of every five votes we've taken in this Congress has been to reduce protections on our air, on our water, on our open spaces, et cetera.

This bill includes a coal ash title that endangers the health and safety of thousands of communities, provisions that would increase the levels of toxic mercury, lead, and cancer-causing toxins in the air and water. There are provisions in this bill that gut the Clean Air Act.

Why the House would waste precious time redebating these bills and voting on them once again is a mystery to me and I think must be a mystery to anyone who is observing the behavior of this House of Representatives. It only underscores the fact that the House Republican majority is more focused on passing message bills than addressing the real issues that face our Nation.

The remaining new title of this bill consists of a bill that was approved in the Resources Committee back in February. It purports to halt an ongoing effort by the Obama administration to rewrite a so-called "midnight regulation" that was adopted by the Bush administration on mountaintop removal mining. This Bush midnight mountaintop removal rule weakened a Reagan-era regulation by increasing the ability of the mining companies to dump mining waste in streams. Yes, believe it or not, they want to weaken those protections. It's another provision of this bill before us today.

The Obama administration has signaled that it intends to revise the Bush administration regulation to better protect local communities, to better protect public health, to better protect the water. However, this effort is only at the very early stages, and the Obama administration has not even issued a proposed rule. This is unnecessary, going in the wrong direction, and weakening environmental protections for this country.

Those are reasons enough to oppose this bill.

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I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. Chairman, this legislation is drafted so broadly that it's likely to cause real damage. It would prevent the Interior Department from issuing nearly any new regulation under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act. The bill would prevent the Interior Department from undertaking any of a number of actions that it is considering to ensure that mining operations are safe for the workers and for the public and for our environment. I filed an amendment to narrow the scope of this title, but the majority would not make it in order.

Furthermore, H.R. 3409 would completely paralyze the Office of Surface Mining, which is responsible for protecting the citizens and workers, and we should not limit this agency when it comes to worker safety.

This bill would threaten public health by blocking the critical Clean Air Act regulations that limit dangerous air pollutants, as I said earlier, including mercury in the air that we breathe.

Stop the War on Coal Act

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This is an irresponsible bill; it is unnecessary. We have important work to do to shore up this economy and to create jobs. Why in the world we are doing this is beyond anybody's reasonable explanation.
