
West Virginia Chamber responds to Mr Byrd coal statement

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Wvmetronews.com quoted Mr Steve Roberts president of West Virginia Chamber of Commerce as saying that it was his first reaction to the opinion piece US Senator Mr Robert C Byrd issued this week, a piece titled "Coal Must Embrace the Future."

Mr Roberts said that it was not what he and many others wanted to hear from the longtime Senator, especially those with a stake in pending surface mine permits that are going through another review from the Environmental Protection Agency.

Mr Roberts said that "A lot of people wanted to hear that Senator Mr Byrd was going to use his clout and seniority in Congress, and the fact that he was an early supporter of Barack Obama, to really have a heart to heart, face to face conversation with the President. Instead, Senator Mr Byrd called for an open and honest dialogue about coal's future in West Virginia. Scapegoat and stoking fear among workers over the permitting process is counter productive."

Mr Byrd said that "I believe that the notion of holding the health care of over 300 million Americans hostage in exchange for a handful of coal permits is beyond foolish; it is morally indefensible. It is a non starter, and puts the entire state of West Virginia and the coal industry in a terrible light."

Mr Roberts said that plenty of West Virginians don't think it's beyond foolish. He added that "We just would have expected, maybe, a higher level of engagement between Senator Byrd and his staff and people who are actually in West Virginia working on these issues before hearing such a pronouncement from him. What I heard, and I read the message carefully, is 'You can't fight City Hall. You guys better get on board and, by the way and while I'm at it, I'm going to be critical of the people in West Virginia who've been working on this issue.'"

(Sourced from www.wvmetronews.com)

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