

Appalachian Communities: Trump Kills Study on Health Impacts of Mountaintop Removal Coal Mines

Stopping the study "without warning or adequate reason is beyond heartless"

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Featured image: "Stopping this study is a ploy to stop science in its tracks and keep the public in the dark about health risks as a favor to the mining industry, pure and simple," said Rep. Raul M. Grijalva (D-Ariz.), the ranking member of the House Committee on Natural Resources. (Photo: [Rainforest Action Network/flickr/cc](#))

Outrage has followed the Trump administration's decision late last week to put the brakes on a study into the health impacts of mountaintop removal coal mining in Central Appalachia.

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine [said](#) Monday it received a letter from the Interior Department's Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement ordering it to put a halt on its two-year [project](#) "largely as a result of the Department's changing budget situation."

"The OSM," as journalist Ken Ward Jr. [writes](#) at the West Virginia Gazette-Mail, "had committed more than \$1 million to the study, which was launched last year after a request from officials from the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection and the state Bureau for Public Health" in light of scientific research linking "mountaintop removal to increased risks of birth defects, cancer, and premature death among residents living near large-scale surface coal mines in Appalachia."

Bill Price, senior Appalachia organizing representative for Sierra Club's Beyond Coal campaign, called it

"infuriating that Trump would halt this study on the health effects of mountaintop removal coal mining, research that people in Appalachia have been demanding for years. Trump has once again shown the people of Appalachia that we mean nothing to him. From his proposed budget cuts to the Appalachian Regional Commission, to pushing to take away healthcare from thousands of Appalachian people, to now stripping doctors and scientists of the ability to warn us about the health effects of mountaintop coal removal, Trump's showing that he's only been pretending to care about our communities."

"What did we ever do to him?" Price continued. "Everyone knows there are major health risks living near mountaintop removal coal mining sites, but communities living with daily health threats were counting on finally getting

the full story from the professionals at the National Academies of Science. To take that away without warning or adequate reason is beyond heartless. It appears that the only people Trump cares about in Appalachia are coal executives, not the people who've lived and worked here for generations. People here trusted him, but he is proving he didn't deserve that trust."

Also denouncing the development is Rep. Raul M. Grijalva (D-Ariz.), the ranking member of the House Committee on Natural Resources, who [said](#) the move was another sign of the administration's war on science and interest in doing the industry's bidding.

"Every time some reckless industry hurts working people, this administration is there to provide political cover," Grijalva said Monday.

"Mountaintop removal mining has been shown to cause lung cancer, heart disease, and other medical problems. Clearly this administration and the Republican Party are trying to stop the National Academy of Sciences from uncovering exactly how harmful this practice is. Stopping this study is a ploy to stop science in its tracks and keep the public in the dark about health risks as a favor to the mining industry, pure and simple," Grijalva said.

As Michael Gerrard, director of Columbia University's Sabin Center for Climate Change Law, [summarized](#) dryly on Twitter:

"Trump's great way of helping his West Virginia voters: Halt scientific study of how mountaintop removal coal mining makes them sick."

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