

of that mission. Forty-six years ago, if the unthinkable occurred and the astronauts never made it back to Earth, President Nixon had a speech prepared to deliver to the Nation.

If the worst happened, the President would have said:

In ancient days, men looked at stars and saw their heroes in the constellations. In modern times, we do much the same, but our heroes are epic men of flesh and blood.

I was honored to meet the members of the Apollo 11 crew, including Neil Armstrong before he died. Indeed, these men were epic heroes of mine. Many of us grew up in an era where we were proud to be the Nation that sent men to the Moon, and we still are. Nothing can change that fateful decade of discovery coupled with frustration, trial coupled with error, all resulting in that historic world-changing mission.

I want our kids and grandkids to look back and be proud citizens of the Nation that made our Moon hospitable, sent astronauts to Mars, and keeps sending spacecraft past the outer reaches of our solar system. Renewed vigor in our country's space program will ensure we continue to make mankind-sized leaps for years to come.

CLOSURE OF COLOWYO COAL MINE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TIPTON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. TIPTON. Mr. Speaker, mines in Colorado's Third Congressional District provide not only critical jobs, they also provide the reliable, affordable electricity on which countless Americans rely.

The future of one such mine, operated by Colowyo in Moffat County, is now in jeopardy after a Federal judge sided with a radical environmental group notorious for filing lawsuits, at the expense of taxpayers who often end up footing their litigation bill.

I am urging the Department of the Interior to take swift action to prevent the impending closure of the Colowyo mine, and I want to thank Senator CORY GARDNER for his partnership in this effort.

On May 8, 2015, the Federal district court for the district of Colorado issued an order determining that the Office of Surface Mining failed to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act in 2007, when it issued a mine plan for approval of the Colowyo coal mine.

The court gave OSM 120 days to be able to prepare a new analysis and issue a new decision. If OSM does not complete the process in 120 days, the court stated that it would vacate the mine plan, effectively shutting down the mine on September 6.

Unfortunately, despite repeated insistence from myself, Senator GARDNER, county officials, and the surrounding local communities, this administration decided against appealing the court's ruling.

We have to ask the question: Does not the executive branch have a duty

to defend its permitting actions? Of course, it does. The Federal Government must vigorously defend the legality of its permitting actions and leave policy debates over the role of coal in the legislative and rulemaking proceedings where those debates belong.

Here is where we stand as the September 6 deadline approaches. The livelihoods of thousands of northwest Coloradans are in peril, as they rely on an administration with a track record of attacks on the mining industry and affordable electricity to do the right thing. Unfortunately, this administration hasn't done much to allay our concerns.

A mine closure would jeopardize 220 direct jobs and millions in economic activity. While 220 jobs may not sound like much, to the town of Craig, population 9,400, that has a significant economic impact on this community.

To properly be able to understand the scale of this potential catastrophe, this is equivalent to the President's hometown of Chicago shedding 63,000 well-paying jobs.

The adverse effects of shutting down this mine go beyond the jobs at the mine that would be lost. Coal produced by this mine, located in Moffat and Rio Blanco Counties, is used to generate power at Craig Station. The mine is a critical supplier of western Colorado's energy. It provides reliable, affordable electricity in much of the western half of the State.

Last week, I attended a meeting to discuss the future of the Colowyo mine in Glenwood Springs with Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell; Bureau of Land Management Director Neil Kornze; and a number of western Colorado community leaders, including Moffat County Commissioner John Kinkaid and Craig Mayor Ray Beck.

While it would have been preferable for the Secretary to make time to be able to meet with the miners in Moffat County who are facing the loss of their livelihood, look them in the eye, and hear their stories, she did meet with this group; and I hope that she received a better understanding of the important impact of the Colowyo mine on the impact of the economy in northwest Colorado.

I was pleased to be able to hear Secretary Jewell assure us before the meeting that the Department of the Interior is on schedule to be able to complete a new environmental assessment by the court's deadline of September 6; and, if for some reason they fail to meet that schedule, they will request an extension.

I hope the Secretary realizes that the decisions made in Washington have lasting impacts on everyday working Americans. Unfortunately, we have seen repeated attempts by this administration to impose drastic and, in some cases, outright unattainable mandates on the existing electricity sources.

Communities such as Craig have expressed concerns that these proposed

regulations will work to the detriment of the local economies by shutting down local power plants, negatively affecting Colorado's mining industry, and needlessly burdening Coloradan families and businesses with higher energy costs; yet here we are on the cusp of leaving over 220 honest, hard-working people without a paycheck.

This battle offers a vivid and all too familiar lesson in how environmental special interests, if not balanced against the practical need for a healthy and growing economy, can wreak havoc in the everyday lives of Coloradans. The careful balance between environmental protection and economic prosperity is regrettably missing from this administration's policies.

The most troubling part of all of this is that the effects of these misguided regulations won't actually result in cleaner air overall, but will jeopardize the reliability of the electrical grid and have a severe economic impact.

The people of Moffat County are the people who are feeling these impacts. The people of Moffat County need to know that they are not alone in this effort. I am committed to doing everything within my power to be able to fight for affordable, reliable, and responsible energy production.

COAL ASH WASTE DISPOSAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New Jersey (Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, this week, the House will consider dangerous legislation on coal ash that will put communities and families in New Jersey in danger. We need strong Federal regulation on coal ash waste. Poor management practices in States like Pennsylvania and New York that border New Jersey affect my constituents' lives.

The Delaware River provides drinking water to one-third of New Jersey's municipalities. In 2005, Martins Creek Power Plant in Pennsylvania spilled 100 million gallons of coal ash across 10 acres into the Delaware, contaminating that drinking water with arsenic. Towns surrounding the Delaware, towns that depend on the river for the fishing and recreational activity that drives their economies were devastated.

In New York, the EPA found that coal ash from a power station had contaminated groundwater with iron, selenium, manganese, aluminum, and at least 10 other dangerous chemicals.

H.R. 1734 not only fails to protect communities from toxic pollution, it undermines legitimate efforts to protect our communities.

I urge my colleagues to vote against it. All of our constituents deserve better.

AUDIT THE FED

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from