



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on August 17, 2012

Republican Candidates Campaign Against Obama's "War on Coal"

Combatting the Environmental Protection Agency's flurry of new regulations on coal and other energy resources has become a campaign platform for Republicans in key battleground states. GOP contenders in states such as Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia are directing their focus to the Obama administration's anti-coal policies, while blaming their Democratic rivals for bolstering the EPA's intrusive regulatory efforts.



Representative Morgan Griffith (R-Va.) recently launched a pro-coal campaign positioning 150 billboards in six different swing states aimed to underscore President Obama's purported opposition to the coal industry. "Too many lawmakers in Washington have ignored President Barack Obama's War on Coal," Griffith said this week. "The Count on Coal campaign is important to Virginians because it is educating the public that coal is not just about mining jobs, it's about creating all types of jobs, supplying affordable electricity for families [and] businesses and doing it in a reliable, trusted way."

"Coal is a blessing," Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel, who's challenging Democratic incumbent Sherrod Brown for the Ohio Senate seat, recently [told](#) a crowd of supporters. "There are some who are trying to convince the country that coal is a liability.... It's not a Democratic or Republican issue. It's an economic issue."

At a campaign rally late last month, Mandel said 80 percent of Ohioan homes are powered by coal, and that the state's prodigious history in manufacturing is largely attributed to its "great history of providing affordable energy." "As a Marine veteran, I know that what these guys are doing underground contributes to national security — not just the economy," Mandel added. "America is safest when we are producing energy here."

Other Republican Senate challengers in heavy coal-production states have anchored their opponents to what they epitomize as President Obama's "war on coal." "As the owner of several coal-mining companies, I was on the receiving end of the President's and Bob Casey's costly, job-killing regulations," [charged](#) Tom Smith, who's challenging Democratic Senator Bob Casey in Pennsylvania. "I had to wade through a sea of red tape just to run my business, and was forever fearful for the employees and families that depended on our success."

Brown and Casey have been scrutinized for hailing support for the EPA's Utility MACT rule, which could force companies to install expensive technological upgrades to eliminate various pollutants from coal-fired power plants. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has branded the rule as one of the most costly regulations ever imposed on power plants, leading to fewer jobs and a boost in consumer energy prices. "The President's EPA has clearly declared a war on coal — an industry crucial to our economy and Sen. Casey has done nothing to support the energy industry and the Pennsylvania jobs it creates," Smith [contended](#).



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Consequently, many Democrats have been distancing themselves from Obama's widely perceived war on coal. Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), for example, voted against implementing the Utility MACT rule, declaring that "enough is enough" and that the regulation would have "devastating effects on our families, jobs and economy." Manchin also said he will be passing on the Democratic National Convention this year.

The EPA's string of new environmental rules has already prompted widespread layoffs as well as plant and mine closures. Consol Energy [announced](#) it would lay off 318 workers this month while shuttering operations at its Red Bird West coal mine, due to EPA measures imposed by the Obama administration's burdensome environmental policies.

Furthermore, PBS Coals Inc. in Pennsylvania had to lay off 225 employees last month working in mines in Somerset County, citing reduced demand and stringent new regulations. And finally, OhioAmerican Energy, Inc. announced layoffs of about 50 employees this month, also citing the EPA's coal regulations as a contributor.

The President is waging "war on coal seeking to destroy the coal industry and the jobs of our own employees and the livelihoods of their families," [said](#) a miner from PBS Coals Inc. The company's CEO explained that "the escalating costs and uncertainty generated by recently advanced EPA regulations and interpretations have created a challenging business climate for the entire coal industry."

The Obama administration's anti-coal policies have begun to plague him among his own voter base, as historically solid Democratic labor unions are abandoning their support for the president. "Our members count on coal-fired power plants and burning of coal to keep jobs," [asserted](#) Mike Caputo, vice president of the United Mine Workers of America's International Executive Board. "We're a very Democratic union and we try to listen to the rank and file. They've sent a clear message that they're not supportive of the environmental rules that are being put in place."



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