

**STATEMENT OF BRUCE A STEVENS
RESOURCE SERVICES, LLC
BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE**

HEARING ON “PROTECTING WORKERS AND POWERING AMERICA: THE FUTURE OF MINING”

MAY 8, 2026

Chairman Walberg and Congressman Messmer, thank you for inviting me to testify today on the state of Indiana’s coal industry and the associated workforce issues.

I. History of Indiana’s Coal Industry

Coal has been mined in Indiana since the early 1800s, when settlers obtained coal from valley outcrops for domestic use. Small commercial operations followed with industry growing rapidly near the turn of the 20th Century, due in part to the construction of numerous railroads. Coal was of vast importance during World War I and World War II, as it provided energy for manufacturing items necessary for the war effort. Most mining during this time was done using underground recovery methods, in which miners accessed the coal seam either through a slope or a shaft. Shortly thereafter, with the advent of large-scale machinery, there was a shift toward recovering coal using surface techniques. Large surface mines dominated throughout the mid-to-late 1900s. Beginning in the first decade of the 21st century, underground coal mines had a resurgence. Currently, underground recovery exceeds surface coal mine production in Indiana.

Indiana typically ranks 8th in the nation in coal production and has ranked as high as 5th. Indiana mines produced 29 million tons of coal in 1918, driven by demand during World War I. Production was steady, typically in the range of 30 to 36 million tons, throughout the latter part of the 20th century into the first decade of the 21st. In 2014, Indiana mined more coal than at any other time in history, at over 39 million tons. Since then, and primarily due to onerous federal regulations affecting coal-fired power plants, Indiana’s production has declined significantly. Just eleven years after the 2014 record-setting year, Indiana produced less than half that amount of coal at 18.4 million tons. The following table shows coal production over the past several decades.

Year	Surface Production (In Tons)	Underground Production (In Tons)	Total Production
1988	29,221,509	1,176,123 (4%)	30,397,632

1998	33,651,153	3,042,060 (8%)	36,693,213
2008	23,904,274	12,143,141 (34%)	36,047,415
2014	21,203,245	17,981,163 (46%)	39,184,408
2018	17,047,192	16,465,683 (49%)	33,512,875
2025	7,538,631	10,895,219 (59%)	18,433,850

II. Industry Downturn and Its Causes

Unfortunately, there is little in the record about Indiana coal mine employment numbers throughout the years. Obviously, as mechanization evolved, one miner could produce more coal than a miner a century ago. Regardless, the table above demonstrates that the industry has declined in recent years. There are fewer mines and less production, equating to fewer miners.

There has been a significant change in the number of companies producing coal in Indiana and the number of coal mines over the past forty years. In 1988, 39 companies were operating 72 mines in Indiana. Of these, 67 were surface mines, and 5 were underground mines, spread across 13 southwestern Indiana counties, providing a robust employment base for the region. In 2025, 6 companies were operating 9 mines. Of these, 6 are surface mines, and 3 are underground mines, located in 6 southwestern Indiana counties. The table below documents this contraction:

Year	Companies	Mines	Surface	Underground
1988	39	72	67	5
1998	19	46	44	2
2008	10	27	21	6
2014	13	27	19	8
2018	7	15	10	5
2025	6	9	6	3

As demonstrated in the discussion above and the figures, there has been a significant downturn in the industry, mainly due to coal-fired power plant closures driven by federal regulatory pressure. Beginning over 15 years ago, some federal regulations forced utilities to make early compliance decisions, including requirements to install technologies that lacked proven solutions. Although some of these regulations were subsequently nullified or revised under other administrations, the damage was already done. Miners lost good-paying jobs and

had to seek alternative employment, often at lower wages and with fewer benefits than they previously had.

The human cost of this contraction has been significant. Many communities in Indiana's coal region originated from a thriving coal industry; towns were built near the coal mines before modern transportation. The decrease in employment opportunities has led to a shrinking tax base in many counties, population loss, and declining school enrollment in some areas. It is estimated that for every coal miner, there are three associated jobs with companies that provide goods and services to the industry, meaning the ripple effect of mine closures extends far beyond the mine gates.

III. Indiana's Coal Workforce: Skilled, Well-Compensated, and Community-Invested

Indiana's coal miners are highly skilled men and women. Today's coal industry is one of the most intensively regulated industries in the nation, governed by state and federal regulatory agencies with purview of the Mine Safety and Health Act, the Surface Mining Act, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, and others. Miners today do not produce coal with picks and shovels; instead, they use highly specialized, mechanized equipment that requires training and experience to operate. Specialties within the workforce include:

- Equipment operation and maintenance
- Mine safety and regulatory compliance
- Electrical systems and instruments
- Welding and fabrication
- Computerized mine controls and monitoring
- Engineering and mine planning

These are not entry-level positions. Indiana's coal miners earn excellent salaries with strong benefit packages that support their families. The average annual salary of an Indiana coal miner is over \$90,000, considerably higher than other nearby sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture. They are active members of their communities, contributing to clothing and toy drives, youth recreation facilities, and other local causes. Indiana's coal miners take much pride in their work and in their communities. These are the kind of people southwestern Indiana needs to retain and support.

IV. Workforce Development: Vincennes University and the Role of the Federal Government

Although the coal industry has seen a significant reduction, several mines remain in production. Each requires a competent workforce. Much of the training is hands-on and gained through experience at the coal mine itself, but Vincennes University also provides the required classroom component. The location of this field hearing, Vincennes University's Gibson County Center for Advanced Manufacturing & Logistics at Fort Branch, is a testament of what targeted federal support for workforce development can accomplish. The Center is a

state-of-the-art facility that is home to Vincennes' Mining Program and is the designated recipient of federal grant funding from the Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), which provides training and retraining assistance for Indiana's miners. This facility averages training and re-training nearly 3,000 coal miners annually.

The program was initiated in October 2005 for miners across all segments of the mining industry, including coal, sand and gravel, cement, crushed stone, dimension limestone, gypsum, shale, and clay. It provides the required training for new underground and surface miners, as well as annual refresher training. Additional offerings include 100 Hour Electrical Training, First Aid and CPR certification, Hazard Communication Plans, and training on mine atmosphere and environment, mining law, and regulations. Training is delivered through MSHA-certified instructors with many years of hands-on experience.

The facility has modern classrooms with educational/training aids, equipment simulators, and Indiana's only mock underground mine, designed for miner safety and rescue training, as well as fire and confined-space training for first responders. Vincennes University's Miner Program is a true gem in Indiana's workforce development infrastructure, and it serves as a national model for how federal investment can build lasting, community-based training capacity.

Sustaining and expanding this program requires continued federal commitment. Specifically, this Committee should consider:

- Ensuring continued and stable grant funding for state-based mining training programs like Vincennes University's, with multi-year funding certainty that allows proper planning for long-term programs, hiring necessary staff to execute these programs, and investing in equipment;
- Exploring the creation of or expansion of registered apprenticeship pathways in mining occupations through the Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship, which would provide structured, earn-while-you-learn pathways for new miners and help rebuild the talent pipeline that has eroded during the industry's contraction;
- Directing DOL to study and report on workforce displacement among former coal miners, including barriers to re-employment at comparable wages, to better understand the ongoing economic impact on affected communities and inform future workforce policy.

V. The Case for Coal: Energy Demand, Grid Reliability, and the National Interest

There is a significant and growing need for coal as an energy source. The rapid expansion of Artificial Intelligence, data centers, and manufacturing, along with the reshoring of foreign manufacturers, is creating unprecedented demand for reliable electricity. Unlike wind and solar, coal is a dispatchable, storable energy source that can provide constant baseload power 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, regardless of weather conditions. Indiana's grid reliability

and the competitiveness of its business climate depend, in a meaningful way, on maintaining coal as a component of the energy mix.

Indiana coal also helps keep electricity rates lower for Indiana families and businesses. Abundant, affordable, domestically produced energy is a strategic asset, particularly as the U.S. competes globally for manufacturing investment and seeks to reduce supply chain vulnerabilities.

Coal stands ready to power these sectors, but to do so, the utilities must be given certainty that it will remain a viable and endorsed fuel source and that a future administration will not unwind regulatory reforms. As Congress mandated in the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, Section 102(f), the law's purpose is to "assure that the coal supply essential to the Nation's energy requirements, and to its economic and social well-being is provided and strike a balance between protection of the environment and agricultural productivity and the Nation's need for coal as an essential source of energy." This mandate originated in 1977 and remains as important today as when it was initially written.

VI. Conclusion

Indiana's coal industry has deep roots, a skilled and dedicated workforce, and an important role to play in the nation's energy future. But sustaining that role requires support for the people who do the work. This Committee has an opportunity to support the workforce training infrastructure, like the program here at Vincennes University, that keeps experienced miners working safely and opens doors for the next generation. I urge the Committee to prioritize continued funding for training grants and other educational opportunities, explore apprenticeship pathways in mining, and examine the workforce impacts of the industry's contraction on Indiana's communities.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to your questions.