



Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice

Write Here! Write Now! Climate Justice Month -- April 2018

ISSUE: Support the RECLAIM Act 2017 to release funds to assist coalfield states and Indian tribes.

www.uusj.org click on Advocacy for Issue Action Information
advocacy@uusj.org 703-786-5206 or 202-600-9132

Time period: Climate Justice Month -- Send by two-day delivery by Friday, May 4, or make arrangement to scan/PDF and send via /email to advocacy@uusj.org by 12pm ET, Monday, May 7

Instructions for Writing Your Letter

- **Focus on the the ASK:** Support the RECLAIM Act 2017, which would unlock existing funds to assist coal communities. We believe this will provide a “Just Transition” from a coal-dependent economy and will put people back to work leading to a more sustainable community and a brighter future.
- **Be original and speak from the heart!** If possible describe a personal experience, story, or concern or include 1-2 talking points (on page 2), **in your own words**, to support the main message.
- **Include a clear and specific action request such as** “I urge you to...”
- **Include your name and complete mailing address** - proves that you are a constituent.

Sample Letter to Adapt

Today’s date

Dear Senator _____, [name of your senator; please write to both]

For Unitarian Universalists, April is Climate Justice Month, and we are especially called to bring the interconnected web of life back into balance. I am a UU (from... optional: include your congregation), and I believe in the inherent worth and dignity of all people. My faith calls us to speak up and stand with people who are most at risk, and to protect our environment, living beings and our planet.

I urge you to support the RECLAIM Act which will release existing funds from the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Fund to help economically-struggling coal communities especially in Appalachia and other coal states and Indian tribes. We have a moral obligation to ensure that those most impacted by the massive loss of coal-mining jobs are empowered and given the resources they need to create a more sustainable economy and restore their land and water resources.

[Insert personal experience, story, concern, or pick 1-2 talking points (page 2), in your own words, to support the message]

[Insert personal wrap-up statement such as: I hope to hear from you about your position on the on the RECLAIM Act.]

Sincerely,
YOUR NAME and **COMPLETE ADDRESS**

(See other side for Background, Talking Points and Key Messages)

Background & UU Grounding

Background:

The RECLAIM Act (Revitalizing the Economy of Coal Communities by Leveraging Local Activities and Investing More) is a vital piece of legislation for communities devastated by the decline of the coal industry. STATUS: There is one bill in the House and two similar bills in the Senate -- the House version is preferred. **The coal industry lobbied successfully to have the Act removed from the 2018 Omnibus budget.** WHAT THE BILL WOULD DO: If passed, the Act would put to work roughly one billion dollars over five years from the reserve of the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Fund across 25 states and three Indian tribes. The funds are already collected and ready to use to clean up abandoned coal mines and the lands and waters damaged and polluted by them, as well as to promote economic diversification, targeting the most economically-distressed coal communities. **There is support among both Republicans and Democrats, with similar bills in the House and Senate.**

The Act would support a “Just Transition” from coal-dependent communities to a more diversified economy that will provide a brighter future while building on the legacy of hard-working people who have fueled America’s industrial revolution. Funds would help reclaim and restore land, water resources, and support economic revitalization as coal mining jobs continue to disappear.

UU Grounding: UUs believe each person should have the opportunity to reach his or her potential. Our Seventh Principle calls for “respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.” [Our 2017 Statement of Conscience on Escalating Economic Inequity](#) calls for support to economically struggling communities, especially those that have been harmed by exploitation and unwise policies.

Key Message, Facts and Talking Points

Key Messages:

Support the RECLAIM Act (S 738 and HR 1731 -- House version preferred), which will release \$1 billion of existing funds over five years from the Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation (AML) Fund to 25 states and three Indian tribes. It would support reclamation and restoration of land and water resources, and support economic revitalization in coal communities in economic distress due to the continuing reduction of jobs in the coal mining industry.

Facts and Talking Points:

- **The RECLAIM Act funds will help put people back to work.** In addition to cleaning up abandoned mine sites, the funds can be used to spur long-term economic growth in agriculture, energy, industrial parks, and recreational tourism, creating new jobs wanted and supported by the community.
- **Front-line coal country communities support this bill.** [Public Opinion Strategies](#), a leading Republican polling firm, [reported](#) that **89% of registered voters in Appalachia support the RECLAIM Act.** By a two-to-one margin, voters prefer that decision-makers focus on helping these areas transition and diversify their economy, rather than fighting government regulations to help bring back coal mining jobs.
- **Not one cent of taxpayer funds would be used** -- these are existing funds that would be disbursed rather than sitting in Washington.

(See other side for writing instructions and sample letter)