



**INTERNATIONAL
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LONNIE R. STEPHENSON
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June 13, 2018

VIA EMAIL

To: All Members of the United States Senate

Re: The Coal-Connected Communities Recovery Act

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the approximately 775,000 active members and retirees of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), I write in support of the “Coal-Connected Communities Recovery Act,” soon to be introduced by Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown. The legislation is an important step in tackling the social and economic disruption caused by coal country’s decline.

Until recently, coal has been the mainstay of generation for the United States’ electricity system. Generations of IBEW utility branch members spent successful careers at coal-fired plants, which fueled the grid and powered factories and modern life. As plants close and renewable energy technologies and other forms of fossil fuel generation emerge, left in the vacuum are communities suffering from lack of high-quality jobs and little economic diversification.

Senator Brown’s legislation seeks to address the associated challenges. It will require more advanced notice of layoffs to allow workers additional time to prepare for pending unemployment, provide income assistance beyond unemployment insurance to those searching for new employment and increase training opportunities and economic development in communities dependent on coal.

As a labor union, we know that decent pay, benefits, healthcare, and retirement are integral components of a good life. The high cost to communities when these key qualities are missing can be measured in unemployment, poverty, illness, addiction, and despair. But with the kind of structural economic assistance promised by the Coal-Connected Communities Recovery Act, an eroding way of life for those who once made a living from coal can be the foundation for growth and new opportunity.

Sincerely yours,

Lonnie R. Stephenson
International President

LRS:lgd

