



P NO. 19 IN THE CENTER FOR WRITING AND SPEAKING HANDOUT SERIES

Sample Persuasive Speech Outline

Professor's Name

Persuasive (Policy) Speech Outline—First Draft

19 November 2018

I. INTRO

- A. Attention-getter: After observing first-hand mountaintop removal in West Virginia, Robert Kennedy, Jr. stated, “King Coal” is now accomplishing what the glaciers could not—obliterating the hemisphere’s oldest, most biologically dense and diverse forests.”
- B. Thesis: Mountaintop removal (MTR) is one of the most devastating environmental issues facing the U.S. today, with significant health and environmental risks.
- C. Motivation: While you may feel somewhat removed from MTR, its contribution to our energy supply is as close as the light switch on the wall.
- D. Preview: I begin with a survey of MTR and its health and environmental risks, then, some major reasons for the persistence of MTR, and, finally, a policy proposal that will mitigate the tremendous damage resulting from MTR.

II. BODY

- A. Mountaintop removal poses devastating health and environmental risks in Appalachia.
 1. Mountaintop removal has destroyed vast amounts of the Appalachia.
 - a) Over 470 mountains leveled since the 1980s (Boston Globe)
 - b) By 2012, over 820,000 acres will be destroyed by MTR (Washington Post)
 2. MTR ravages the environment and threatens human health.
 - a) MTR devastates freshwater streams
 - (1) Over 1200 miles of streams are already severely damaged (John McQuaid)
 - (2) Significant elevations of selenium downstream from valley fills (EPA environmental impact study, 2003)

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- b) MTR destroys ancient forests
 - (1) The EPA estimates that by 2013 a forested area the size of the state of Delaware will have been destroyed by MTR (EPA impact study, 2003)
- c) MTR threatens the health and lives of those living near coal production.
 - (1) Residents near heavy coal production have higher risk for cardiopulmonary disease, chronic lung disease, and kidney disease (American Journal of Public Health, 2008)
 - (2) Hospitalization for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and hypertension are significantly higher for residents near heavy coal production (Journal of Toxicology and Environmental Health, 2007).
 - (3) In 1972, sludge impoundment failed in Logan County, West Virginia, which killed 125 people and destroyed thousands of homes (Kari Lydersen, *The Progressive*)
 - (4) Approximately 450,000 West Virginians are without drinkable water (Julia Fox, *Organization & Environment*)

B. Several factors perpetuate the MTR plague on Appalachia.

- 1. MTR satisfies America's demand for cheap energy.
 - a) In the past 20 years, the U.S. demand for electricity has increased 70% (Julia Fox)
 - b) Coal provides fuel for 52% of America's electricity (Washington Post, 2006)
- 2. Environmental protections were weakened significantly and unenforced during the Bush administration.
 - a) In 2007, the Interior Department, pending EPA approval, did away with regulations that ban dumping mine waste within 100 feet of a stream (John McQuaid, *The Smithsonian*, 2009)

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- b) One EPA official working during the Bush administration told the NY Times that EPA workers “were told to take our clean water and clean air cases, put them in a box, and lock it shut.” (NY Times, Charles Duhigg, 13. Sept. 2009)
- c) State officials in West Virginia cited more than 4200 water pollution violations since 2000 (NY Times, Duhigg)
- d) In December 2008, the last hour before Bush left office, the EPA passed a ruling that did away with a 25-year tradition to regulate the dumping of coal mining waste into waterways (Biggers, Salon, 29 Jan. 2009)

C. Congress should strengthen the Clean Water Act

1. Strengthening the Clean Water Act for MTR requires three provisions
 - a) Create a 2000-foot buffer zone between freshwater streams and coal waste
 - b) Limit the size of all valley fills to 35 acres
 - c) All permits for MTR shall be issued by the EPA under the Clean Water Act

D. The proposed legislation will reduce health risks and the environmental impact of MTR.

1. 2000-foot buffer zone will reduce health risks.
 - a) Currently, mine waste, including the toxic chemical selenium, finds its way into freshwater streams because the lack of a reasonable buffer zone.
 - b) Expanding the buffer zone to 2000 feet (approx. 4/10 of a mile) reduces the risk of harmful chemicals entering fresh-water streams.
2. Limiting the size of valley fills to 35 acres will reduce environmental harm.
 - a) An EPA environment study found that a 35-acre limit “would result in the fewest environmental impacts on streams, forested areas, and species” (Earthjustice)
 - b) Limiting the size of valley fills will also reduce the size of MTR, which results in less deforestation and less likelihood of flooding.

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3. Making the EPA the sole agency for issuing MTR permits will reduce health and environmental harms.
 - a) Currently, permits for MTR may be issued by the Army Corps of Engineers, which has failed miserably in protecting the environment.
 - b) The Corps itself stated that “it probably shouldn’t be overseeing such permits because the dump contained polluting chemicals regulated by the EPA (John McQuaid, The Smithsonian, 2009)
 - c) In 2007, in a case pitting environmentalists against Massey Energy, a judge found that the Corps “failed to take a hard look at the destruction of the headwater streams” in West Virginia (McQuaid, 2009).
 - d) Making the EPA responsible for issuing MTR permits will end the “Nationwide 21” permit process. The “Nationwide 21” permit authorizes discharge of mountaintop mining debris into valleys and streams with virtually no environmental oversight if the Corps has determined that only minimal damage will result.

III. CONCLUSION

- A. **Summary:** MTR brings significant risks of damage to public health and the environment. Implementing a 2000-foot buffer zone, 35-acre limit on valley fills and placing the permit process solely in the hands of the EPA will greatly minimize the risks associated with MTR.
- B. **Call to Action:** I’ve drafted a letter advocating the three changes in the Clean Water Act outlined above. I would like you to take three copies of the letter and send them to your U.S. representative and two state senators. All you need to do is fill in their name and sign the letter.
- C. **Closure:** As Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. states, it is time we stop “obliterating the hemisphere’s oldest, most biologically dense and diverse forests.

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