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## **Campbell County Commission joins a growing list of localities supporting federal proposal to boost Appalachian economy**

This week the Campbell County Commission unanimously approved a resolution in support of the proposed POWER+ Plan, which would disburse more than a billion dollars to strengthen and diversify economies in coalfield communities, including those in East Tennessee. The [POWER+ Plan](#) creates new funding and bolsters existing federal programs designed to diversify the economy in areas that have relied heavily on coal and are experiencing job losses as a result of contractions in the coal economy in recent years.

Campbell County is the first locality in Tennessee to join a growing number of Appalachian communities voicing support for the federal budget proposal, which is currently the most comprehensive plan to support much-needed economic development in the region. City and county officials in coalfield areas have passed resolutions in favor of the plan. The wave of resolutions include the Wise County Board of Supervisors, the Cumberland Plateau planning district and the City of Norton in Virginia and the City of Whitesburg, the City of Benham and The Letcher County Board of Supervisors in Kentucky and City and county officials in Harlan County, Kentucky are considering similar resolutions in the coming days.

The resolution states, “Campbell County supports passage of the POWER+ Plan by the U.S. Congress and encourages Senator Alexander, Senator Corker, and Congressman Fleischman and Congressman Duncan to see passage of this Plan through the federal legislative process. ... The POWER+ Plan includes programs that would disburse \$1 billion in funding for Abandoned Mine Land (AML) projects that create long-term business and economic opportunities; would invest millions in workforce development and job training programs in communities impacted by the decline of the coal industry; and would strengthen the health and pension plans of 100,000 retired coal miners and their families.”

The AML program has reclaimed over \$5 billion worth of land and water problems caused by abandoned coal mines, but more than \$9 billion worth of these abandoned mines remain across the country. The AML component of the POWER+ Plan would disburse \$200 million a year, over five years, from the existing \$2.5 billion AML Fund. This funding would be targeted towards communities hit hardest by the national energy sector’s recent shift away from coal.

June Pyle of the Mountain Community Parent Resource Center says she’s “excited to team up with the County Commission for a brighter future for Campbell County.”

Campbell County Mayor E.L. Morton said “The many abandon mine land sites across Campbell County are currently a liability and we are excited for the opportunity to transform them into an asset that can put people to work and become potential business sites. Funding through the POWER+ Plan can provide opportunities to pair increased Abandon Mine Lands (AML) funding with Brownfield grants in a way that can spur important economic development for our area.”

“I’m so glad to see the Campbell County Commission take a positive stance on the very urgent issue of economic diversification. We need to carry this to Claiborne County and hope they are as open as Campbell County” said Marie Webster, Director of the Clearfork Community Institute which server residence in both Campbell and Claiborne Counties.

“ We need Senator Alexander, Senator Corker, and Congressman Fleischman and Congressman Duncan to support economic diversification for Appalachia by passing a budget that would provide protection for workers’ pensions, train people for new jobs, support recently laid off coal employees and offer incentive for clean energy” said Bonnie Swinford with Tennessee Sierra Club .

After the resolution was passed, Commissioner Sue Nance told a group of citizens “I’m proud of the Campbell County Commission for passing this important resolution.”

The Appalachian Citizens’ Law Center and partners recently released a groundbreaking report on the federal Abandoned Mine Land (AML) program and its economic impacts. The report also analyzes the job-creating potential of the POWER+ Plan. View the report here:

<http://appalachianlawcenter.org/abandoned-mine-land-policy/>

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