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CONTACT: Phil Smith, 571-345-8338, psmith@umwa.org

Proposed rules on carbon emissions from new sources deeply flawed

[TRIANGLE, VA] United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) International President Cecil E. Roberts issued the following statement today:

“The draft regulations issued today by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) dealing with emissions from newly constructed power plants, give lie to the “all-of-the-above” approach to electricity generation in the United States. Clearly, the administration has made the determination that it wants to cut our nation’s most abundant source of fuel, coal, out of the mix.

“Under this proposed set of regulations, there will be no more coal-fired power plants built in the United States. That’s just a fact. People can say all they want about the possibility of using carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology on new plants, but the reality is that absent significant support from the government, no utility will make the commitment to spend billions to add unproven CCS capability to their new power plant.

“These regulations lay the groundwork for a future of significantly higher electricity bills for American ratepayers, especially those who live in states where a majority of the electricity is generated from coal. The current low price of natural gas will not last long, especially in a marketplace where it becomes the dominant fuel. This will be a double whammy on people who live in states where coal is both produced and used as a fuel, like West Virginia, Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, Pennsylvania and others.

“For the UMWA, there is no issue of greater importance. This is about whether or not our members have a future working in an industry that provides steady employment. It is about whether or not our members can continue to earn good wages, provide for their families and be the main economic drivers of the communities where they live. It is also about whether the more than 100,000 UMWA retirees, their dependents and widows who currently receive health care and pension benefits will find those benefits at risk.

“As we ask, ‘What is the future of electricity generation in America?’ we must also ask, ‘What kind of future do we want for America?’ If the answer to that question is one that addresses long-term economic and energy security, then coal must be part of that future. If the answer to that question is one that promotes continued high-paying jobs in rural America, then coal must be part of that future. And if the answer to that question is one that addresses environmental challenges and leaves the world a better place for our children and grandchildren, then we believe coal is part of that future as well.

“We will make that case to EPA in our comments on this proposed regulation. I can only hope that they listen.”