



WHY DO WE NEED THE TENNESSEE SCENIC VISTAS PROTECTION ACT?

- The Tennessee Scenic Vistas Protection Act (TSVPA) SB577/HB291 would prohibit surface coal mining above 2,000 ft. elevation, if that mining would alter or disturb the ridgeline. The TSVPA is aimed at mountain top removal mining. This proposed state law would be a modest limitation on the world's most destructive form of mining.

WHAT IS MOUNTAINTOP REMOVAL MINING?

- Mountain top removal (MTR) mining blows the tops off of mountains with large amounts of explosives to get to the coal. In addition to the permanent destruction of natural beauty and ecosystems, MTR gravely impacts human health and the economy.

HOW DOES MTR IMPACT JOBS IN TENNESSEE?

- As the least labor-intensive way to extract coal, mountain top mining decreases mining jobs in Tennessee by replacing miners with explosives and heavy equipment. Much of the economy of East Tennessee and the Cumberland Mountains is based on the value of the scenic vistas of the region. Surface mining permanently takes land away from industries proven to provide long-term economic benefit such as tourism, hunting, fishing, hiking, whitewater rafting, camping, and forestry. Tourism is the second largest industry in Tennessee and employs over 175,000 Tennesseans. Surface coal mining of all types currently employs less than 270 people in Tennessee.

WHAT ARE THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH IMPACTS OF MTR?

- When a mountain is destroyed, toxins including selenium, mercury, arsenic, lead, copper and chromium are released into the air and water. The mine sites leach toxic chemicals in perpetuity in spite of reclamation. Compared to Appalachian communities without MTR mining, communities around MTR sites have increased mortality rates from lung cancer and heart kidney, and lung disease, along with higher rates of serious birth defects.

WHY DO COAL COMPANIES SAY THAT MOUNTAINTOP REMOVAL MINING DOESN'T HAPPEN IN TENNESSEE?

- State regulators permit coal operators to blow up to 1000 vertical feet of fully forested mountaintops as long as they agree to replace them with piles of rock and rubble and sediment ponds. While the industry prefers to call this cross ridge mining, the mountaintops are nonetheless removed. The decision to attempt to grow trees on reclaimed sites in Tennessee is left up to the Federal Office of Surface Mining, on a permit-by-permit basis. Typically only nonnative grasses will grow on these sites and the sediment ponds must be maintained forever.

WHY ARE DEVOUT CHRISTIANS STANDING AGAINST MOUNTAINTOP REMOVAL AND SUPPORTING THE TENNESSEE SCENIC VISTAS PROTECTION ACT?

- God instructs Christians to "...not defile the land where you live and where I dwell" (Numbers 35:34). The earth belongs to the Lord, and God entrusted us as caretakers of all of creation. We are further instructed to love our neighbors. Many Christians believe MTR is inconsistent with these mandates from God.