

CONTACT

Trey Pollard, 202-904-9187, trey@pollardcommunications.com

Dan Radmacher, Media Specialist, (540) 798-6683, dan@appvoices.org

In Message to Presidential Candidates, Leaders from Coal-Impacted Communities Highlight Economic Transition Progress and Necessary Next Steps

Letter to 2024 hopefuls celebrates progress since release of National Economic Transition Platform and lays out critical needs, including flood resilience and infrastructure investments

NATIONWIDE — Today, local, regional and national organizations sent a letter to both 2024 major party presidential candidates outlining progress made in support of sustainable economic development in coal-impacted communities while also recommending essential next steps — including investments in flood resilience, infrastructure and social services — to build on recent momentum in the next administration.

Many of the signatories were part of a broad alliance of groups representing workers, local governments, entrepreneurs and economic development that released a policy platform known as the National Economic Transition platform in June of 2020. This platform provides a roadmap for federal policymakers to build sustainable and equitable economies for the people and places hardest hit by the changing coal economy. Since its release, several major proposals in the NET platform have been implemented, from landmark investments in restorative economic development and clean energy to funding for the clean-up of abandoned mine lands to billions invested in expanding high-speed internet access in coal-impacted communities. Now, these same leaders are urging 2024 candidates to keep up the momentum at a time when it's most important.

“We are writing now to strongly urge you to commit to sustaining and growing these transformative policies that coal communities are relying on to rebuild and move forward,” **the letter reads**. “Because these programs and investments are so new, their impacts have only just begun to address the devastating economic losses and chronic environmental, health, and social challenges faced by communities where the once-dominant coal industry has precipitously declined.”

The NET platform is a response to the ballooning crises in coal-impacted areas. Amid the sharp decline of the coal sector in recent decades, communities that once relied on coal — from mining communities in Appalachia, the Illinois Basin, Montana, Wyoming and elsewhere to communities with coal-fired power plants from the Navajo Nation to Central Minnesota — all face a potentially devastating crisis. The closure of mines and coal-fired power plants is leading to new job losses, the weakening of the local tax base and cuts to essential services, compounding the struggles of areas already hit hard by previous recessions, decades of

inequality and widespread poverty. For low-income communities, communities of color and tribal communities already disproportionately affected by these changes, these challenges are becoming even more severe.

In the letter, advocates and leaders pointed to key progress, including:

- New investments across numerous federal agencies in capacity building for community-based leaders and in technical assistance;
- Hundreds of billions of dollars for the clean, renewable energy sector, including a bonus tax incentive for energy communities and brownfield sites;
- The permanent extension of the black lung excise tax;
- Tens of billions of dollars in investments in high-speed internet access;

However, the letter stresses that this must only be the start of the effort.

“We ask you to embrace the priorities enumerated in the National Economic Transition platform and work with us to build upon the demonstrated successes and momentum of the last several years,” **the letter reads**. “It is crucial that the next administration and Congress join us in this ongoing work, and not pull the rug out from under the work coal communities are doing, with the country’s support, to build a vibrant new future.”

Amid the devastation caused by Hurricane Helene, including flooding, landslides and wind damage in Appalachia and the Southeast, the policy recommendations include proposals that will build resilience in the face of future extreme weather crises, clean up the abandoned mine lands that often contribute to flooding and invest in physical infrastructure in some of the communities that need it most.

The letter urges 2024 candidates to focus on progress in the seven policy pillars outlined in the NET platform, including proposals to:

- Develop local leadership and capacity, with a focus on Black, Brown, women-led and Indigenous-led organizations and capacity to access new programs and investments;
- Support local businesses and entrepreneurship;
- Provide a bridge for workers to quality jobs;
- Reclaim, remediate and reuse coal sites;
- Improve physical and social infrastructure, including public health and education systems as well as investments in flood resilience and abandoned mine clean up;
- Hold coal companies accountable during bankruptcies;
- Back entities to coordinate transition-related programs and equip communities with the resources they need.

The letter was sent to leadership of each major party presidential campaign along with an offer from the signers to serve as a resource in 2025 and beyond as the next administration develops policies and priorities.

