

East Kentucky Student Senate call for federal investment in region's economy

Hearing and press conference December 2 in Whitesburg City Hall at 1 pm

Two dozen local government entities in the heart of Central Appalachia's coalfields have passed resolutions calling for major federal investment to revive the region's economy. Most have referred specifically to the White House budget proposal called the "POWER+ Plan." All passed unanimously. Since July a groundswell of support has spread across the region for the plan, a \$10 billion proposal to help coal-impacted communities across the country.

"The benefits of the Power+ Plan to the people of Eastern Kentucky, both in the short-term creation of jobs and business opportunities, as well as the long-term economic development of the region, are essential to overcome the devastating effects of our current economic difficulties as we transition to a post-coal economy," wrote Pike Co. Judge Executive William Deskins in a letter to Rep. Hal Rogers.

The Appalachian Renaissance Initiative (ARI) Student Senate is part of the Race to the Top Grant received by Kentucky Valley Educational Cooperative (KVEC) and is comprised of senior and junior students from seventeen school districts in the region. Student Senate members work toward a more participatory role for students, as full partners in their education, through avenues of competitive community problem solving, economic development, and Kentucky Youth Assembly.

Jenkins Independent Senior Senator McKenzie Gibson shared in preparation for the hearing: "I have the pleasure of presenting this resolution at the hearing. This will be a great opportunity to have a say in something so important to our economy and lives of people in my county."

Jenkins Independent School Student Senate members, McKenzie Gibson and Lindsey Belcher, along with other ARI Student Senators will gather in the Whitesburg City Council chambers in Whitesburg City Hall on December 2nd at 1 pm to vote on a resolution in support of the POWER+ Plan. Local elected officials will address the Senate and a press conference will immediately follow. The full event will be live streamed on www.theholler.org.

Cameron Wright, former Senate member, is interning at KVEC as a participant in the Yale Gap Year program. Wright states, "As young people in East Kentucky, our voices are often unheard. This is a chance for the powerful boom of student voice to reverberate off the hills and mountains we call home."