



# Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice

Write Here! Write Now! Climate Justice Month -- April 2018

**ISSUE:** Support the RECLAIM Act 2017 to release funds to assist coalfield states and Indian tribes.

[www.uusj.org](http://www.uusj.org) click on Advocacy for Issue Action Information  
[advocacy@uusj.org](mailto:advocacy@uusj.org) 703-786-5206 or 202-600-9132

**Time period:** Climate Justice Month -- Send your congregation's letters by two-day delivery to arrive by Friday, May 4, or make arrangement to scan/PDF and send via email to [advocacy@uusj.org](mailto:advocacy@uusj.org) by 12pm ET, Monday, May 7

## Instructions for Writing Your Letter

- **Focus on the the ASK:** Support the RECLAIM Act 2017, which would unlock existing funds to assist coal communities. We believe this will provide a "Just Transition" from a coal-dependent economy and will put people back to work leading to a more sustainable community and a brighter future.
- **Be original and speak from the heart!** If possible describe a personal experience, story, or concern or include 1-2 talking points (on page 2), **in your own words**, to support the main message.
- **Include a clear and specific action request such as** "I urge you to..."
- **Include your name and complete mailing address** - proves that you are a constituent.

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## Sample Letter to Adapt

Today's date

Dear Senator \_\_\_\_\_, [name of your senator; please write to both; no address necessary we will deliver your letters]

For Unitarian Universalists, April is Climate Justice Month, and we are especially called to bring the interconnected web of life back into balance. I am a UU (from... optional: include your congregation), and I believe in the inherent worth and dignity of all people. My faith calls us to speak up and stand with people who are most at risk, and to protect our environment, living beings and our planet.

I urge you to support the RECLAIM Act which will release existing funds from the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Fund to help economically-struggling communities in 25 coal states and three Indian tribes. **Any bill that is passed must include sufficient provisions for community involvement in economic diversification planning.** We have a moral obligation to ensure that those most impacted by the massive loss of coal-mining jobs are empowered and given the resources they need to create a more sustainable economy and restore their land and water resources.

*[Insert personal experience, story, concern, or pick 1-2 talking points (page 2), in your own words, to support the message]*

*[Insert personal wrap-up statement such as: I hope to hear from you about your position on the RECLAIM Act.]*

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME and **COMPLETE ADDRESS**

**(See other side for Background, Talking Points and Key Messages)**

updated 4/19/2018

## Background & UU Grounding

### Background:

The RECLAIM Act (Revitalizing the Economy of Coal Communities by Leveraging Local Activities and Investing More) is a vital piece of legislation for communities devastated by the decline of the coal industry. The Act would provide a path towards a brighter future while building on the legacy of hard-working people who have fueled America's industrial revolution. **The RECLAIM Act is supported by Republicans and Democrats.**

**Status:** There are **three similar bills, one in the House and two in the Senate -- all three bills have stalled.** The coal industry lobbied successfully to have the House version of the Act removed from the 2018 Omnibus budget.

**What the bill would do:** If passed, any of the three versions of the Act would put to work roughly **one billion dollars over five years from the reserve of the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Fund** across **25 states and three Indian tribes.** The **funds are already collected** and ready to use to clean up abandoned coal mines and the lands and waters damaged and polluted by them. **What we want to see included in any bill that moves forward, are sufficient provisions for community involvement in economic diversification planning. The provisions would support a "Just Transition" for coal-dependent communities while coal jobs continue to disappear.**

**UU Grounding:** UUs believe each person should have the opportunity to reach his or her potential. Our Seventh Principle calls for "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part." [Our 2017 Statement of Conscience on Escalating Economic Inequity](#) calls for support to economically struggling communities, especially those that have been harmed by exploitation and unwise policies.

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## Key Message, Facts and Talking Points

### Key Messages:

Support the RECLAIM Act 2017 with provisions for funds to support community involvement in economic diversification planning. The Reclaim Act will release \$1 billion of existing funds over five years from the Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation (AML) Fund to 25 states and three Indian tribes. It would support reclamation and restoration of land and water resources. We urge inclusion of funds for economic revitalization in coal communities in economic distress.

### Facts and Talking Points:

- **The RECLAIM Act funds will help put people back to work.** Money from the AML fund must be spent on reclamation, and it still will be under RECLAIM. But by combining it with economic development projects with local buy-in, communities can create new economic opportunities on abandoned mine lands to spur long-term economic growth in agriculture, energy, industrial parks, and recreational tourism, creating new jobs wanted and supported by the community.
- **Front-line coal country communities support this bill.** [Public Opinion Strategies](#), a leading Republican polling firm, [reported](#) that **89% of registered voters in Appalachia support the RECLAIM Act.** By a two-to-one margin, voters prefer that decision-makers focus on helping these areas transition and diversify their economy, rather than fighting government regulations to help bring back coal mining jobs.
- **Not one cent of taxpayer funds would be used** -- these are existing funds that would be disbursed rather than sitting in Washington.

**(See other side for writing instructions and sample letter)**

updated 4/19/2018