

# Growth of U.S. Coal Jobs

## Federal Data Showing Coal Mining Employment Trending Higher Since 2009

Since 2009, every attempt by the Obama administration to control pollution from coal has been met with hostility by the industry and its supporters in Congress. They claim that pollution limits on coal-fired power plants and oversight of mountaintop removal coal mining constitute a “war on coal” that threatens American coal production and coal mining jobs. However, government jobs data point to the opposite trend in recent years.

Data released by the Mining Safety and Health Administration show that the average number of coal mining jobs under the Obama administration is 15.3% higher than the average under the Bush administration. Nationwide, the job totals for 2011 and 2012 marked the highest two-year period for coal mining employment in 15 years.

While the data show some variation among states, each of the top ten coal-producing states have had more mining jobs on average under the Obama administration than under the Bush administration, and nine saw higher coal mining employment in 2012 than at any point during the Bush years.

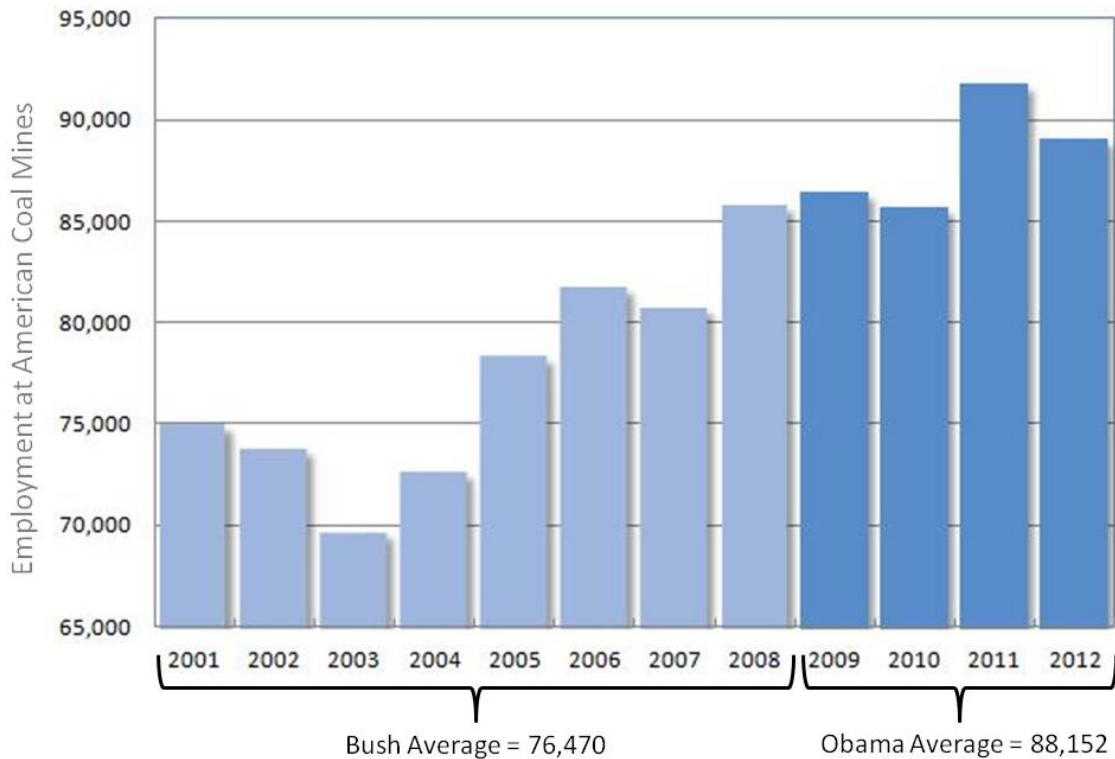


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## National: Coal Mining Employment 2001 - 2012



### **Reasons for Recent Increase in Coal Mining Employment**

While domestic demand for coal has decreased over the past decade, the recent resurgence in coal mining employment is due to an increase in exports, as well as decreased productivity.

**Increased Exports** - According to the Energy Information Agency, coal exports in the fourth quarter of 2012 were higher than the previous five-year range, and were up 1.2% from 2011. More than half of that coal went to Europe, though the U.S. continues to ship large amounts to Asian countries each year.<sup>1</sup>

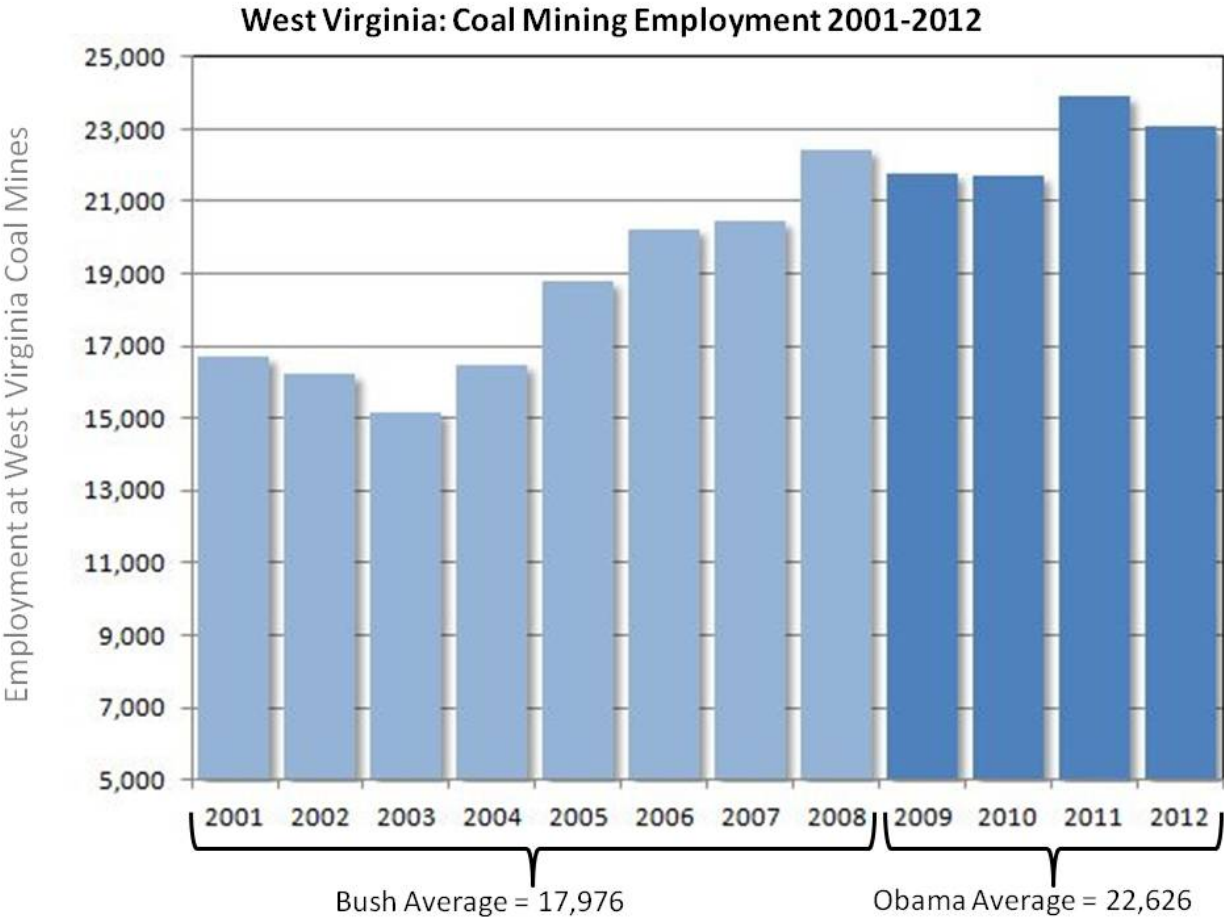
**Decreased Productivity** - American mines are producing coal less efficiently than in the past. Productivity has declined 30% since its peak in 2000.<sup>2</sup> Increased underground mining explains some of the job increases, as it requires more workers per unit of production compared to strip mining.

This trend is particularly evident in Central Appalachia, where coal mining jobs have increased from 28,552 in 2000 to 33,029 in 2012 (+16%) despite total coal production decreasing from 264 million short tons in 2000 to 147 million short tons (-44%) over the same period.<sup>3</sup>

**Coal Mining Jobs in Central Appalachian States**

**West Virginia**

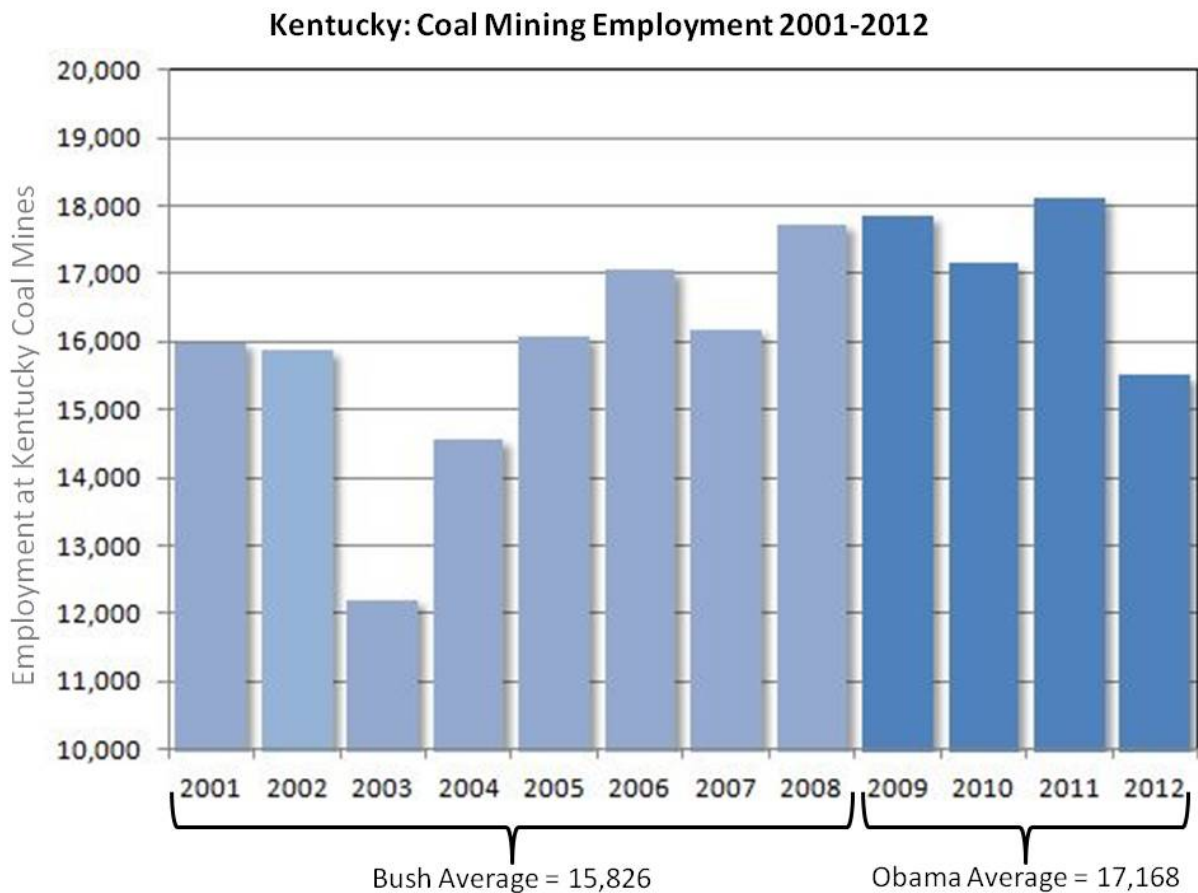
In 2012, West Virginia was the nation’s second leading producer of coal, and the nation’s leader in coal mining jobs. Despite a steady decline in demand for coal, particularly from Central Appalachia, the number of coal mining jobs in West Virginia has climbed recently. The number of jobs in 2011 and 2012 were the highest the state has seen since 1992. The majority of those jobs were in underground mines, while less than 20% were at mountaintop removal coal mines.



Coal mining jobs under the Obama administration are up 26% over the average during the Bush administration, going from 17,976 jobs per year under Bush to 22,626 jobs per year under Obama.

## Kentucky

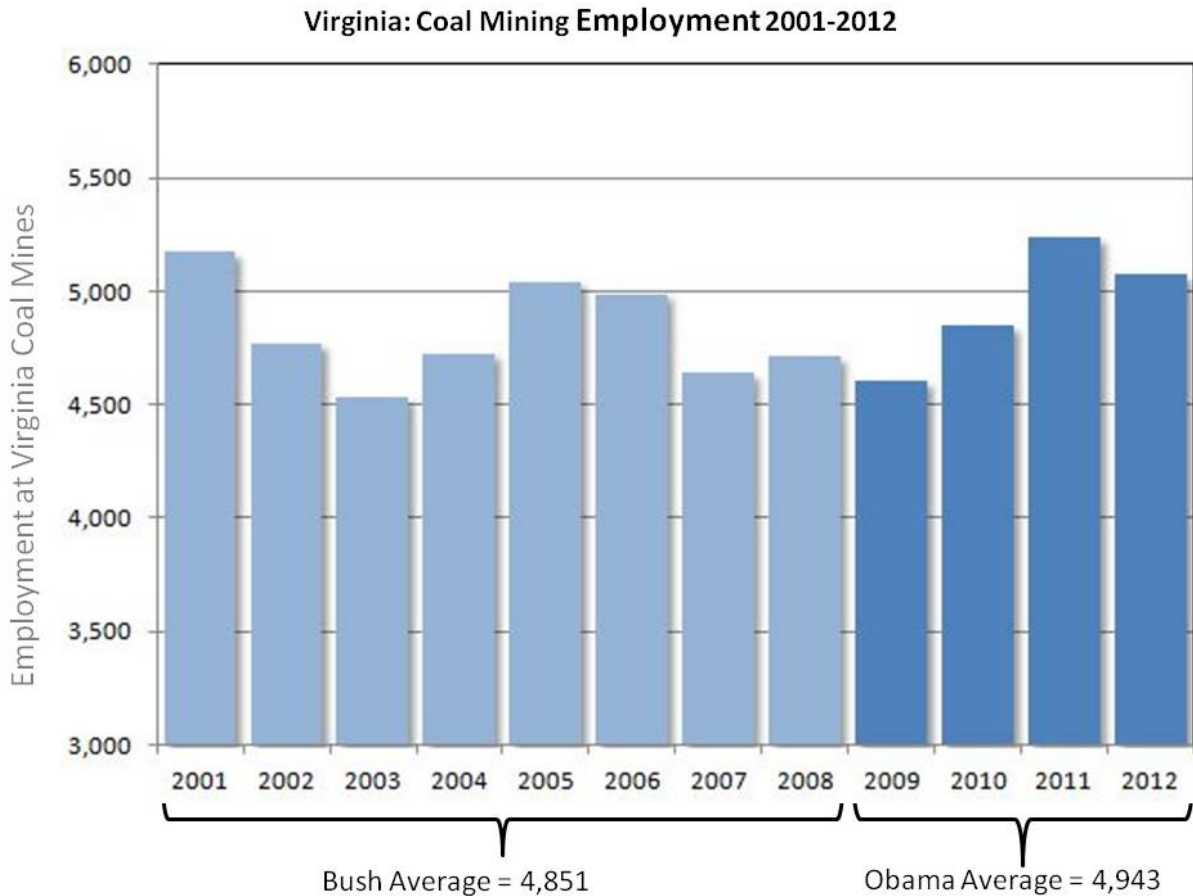
In 2012, Kentucky was the nation's third leading producer of coal, and ranked second in coal mining jobs. Coal mining jobs have been fluctuating in Kentucky over the past decade. Despite a consistent decline in both demand and production over the past 12 years, the average job total under the Obama administration is 17,168, compared to 15,826 under the Bush administration, an increase of 8.5%.



While job numbers dropped in 2012 consistent with market demands, 2011 coal mining job totals were at their highest point since 1997. As is the case throughout Appalachia, increases in underground mining, not mountaintop removal mining, are responsible for sustaining jobs.

## Virginia

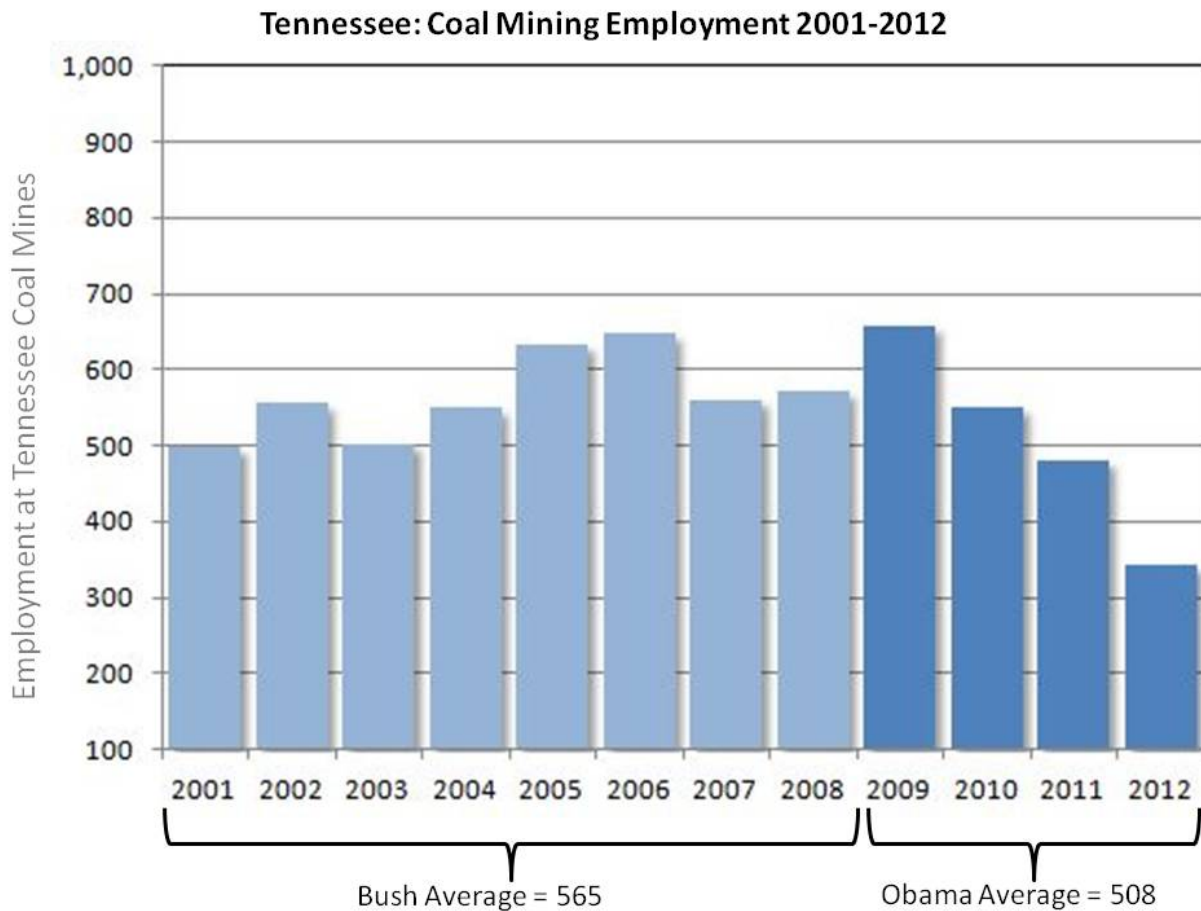
In 2012, Virginia was the nation's 14th leading coal producer, and ranked fifth in total coal mining jobs. Changes in coal mining job totals in Virginia have been relatively moderate over the past 15 years. The years 2011 and 2012 ranked the first and second highest (respectively) in coal-mining jobs since 2001.



These relatively steady jobs numbers are due to an increased reliance on underground mining. Total coal production in Virginia in 2012 was at its lowest point on MSHA's public records, which date back to 1983.

## Tennessee

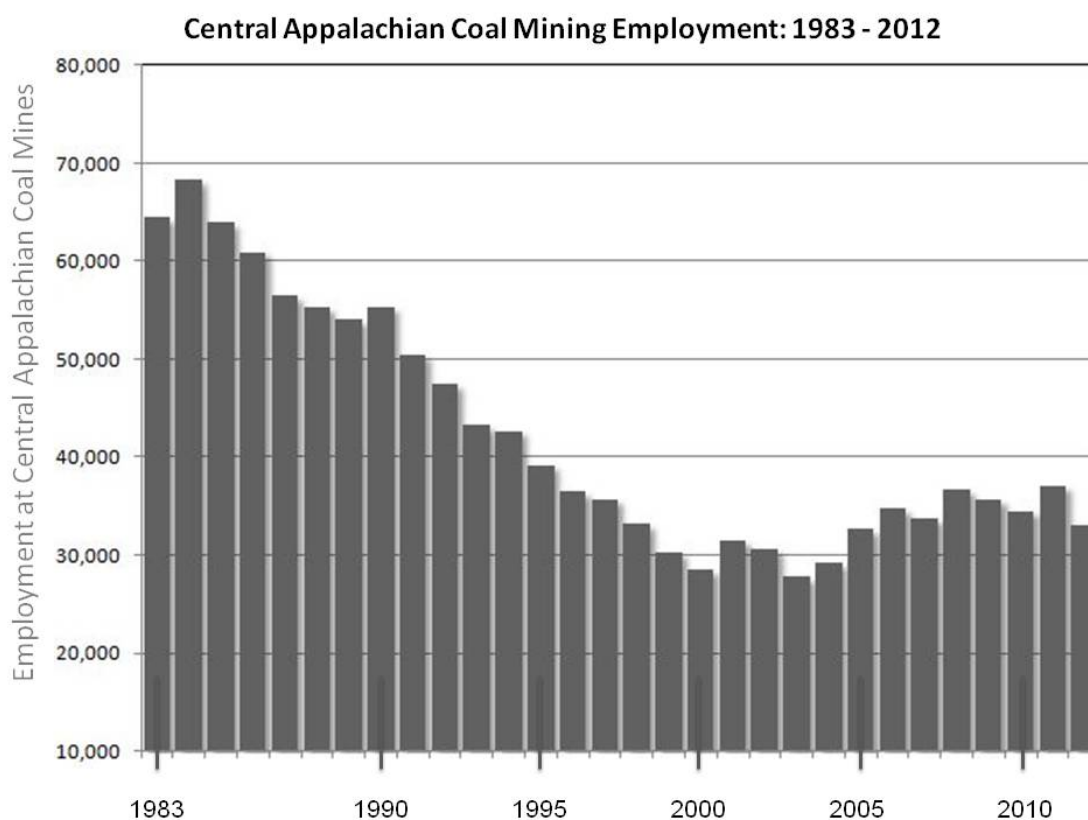
Tennessee ranks 21st out of 25 coal producing states, and produced 0.13% of America's coal in 2012. Tennessee coal mine employment exceeded 2,600 in 1985, but plummeted to less than 700 jobs by 1993.



Retrievable coal in Tennessee is running out, causing coal production to be cut in half between 2008-2012, from 2.6 million to 1.3 million short tons. This decline is compounded by a shift in production methods away from underground mining towards surface mining, and as a result mining jobs in Tennessee have since continued their long-term decline.

## Central Appalachian Trend: Need for Action

Congress is right to be concerned about jobs in America's traditional coal mining regions like Appalachia, but not because of a Democratic administration or environmental regulations. The long-term trends show mine employment is declining, despite the recent uptick, and poverty rates in Appalachian coal counties are among the highest in the nation. Analysts see demand for Appalachian coal continuing to decline, leaving little prospect of an economic revitalization driven by the coal industry. Therefore, the focus should be on creating and attracting new industries to the region, not continuing to subsidize an outmoded industry.



## Endnotes

1. EIA Production Quarterly: <http://www.eia.gov/coal/production/quarterly/>
2. U.S. Department of Energy/Energy Information Administration-0384(2011). <http://www.eia.gov/totalenergy/data/annual/showtext.cfm?t=ptb0707>
3. Mine Safety and Health Administration; Part 50 Address/Employment Data Files, 1983-2012. <http://www.msha.gov/stats/part50/p50y2k/p50y2k.htm>
4. Appalachian Voices; OpenSourceCoal.org