



September 12, 2009

Lowell McAdam
President and Chief Executive Officer
Verizon Wireless

Dear Mr. McAdam:

Thank you for your letter, dated September 10, responding to our letter asking Verizon Wireless to withdraw its sponsorship of the pro-mountaintop removal coal mining, anti-climate legislation rally put on by the coal industry in West Virginia on September 7, 2009.

We are encouraged by your assertion that Verizon's sponsorship of the anti-environmental rally was "not an expression of support for mountaintop removal coal mining or in opposition to climate legislation." And we are even more encouraged by your clarification that Verizon "supports the goals of policy makers who are committed to reducing carbon emissions and protecting the environment."

Verizon seems to be aware that, as a major U.S. corporation, it has a stewardship responsibility to support policies that promote healthy ecosystems, sustainable economies, and climate security. Reining in greenhouse gas pollution to stop runaway global warming before it is too late is undoubtedly the most important policy decision of our generation.

We accept your statement that sponsorship of the rally was "a local decision focused on promoting our products at the event." Verizon is a large corporation and we appreciate the impossibility of being able to review or even know about every decision of its regional offices. Once the controversy became public, however, the national office did know about and did decide to continue participation in the rally. Indeed, Verizon is listed as a "sponsor" to this day on the rally's [official Web site](#), which continues to present the purpose as denouncing "environmental extremists" who believe in global warming and oppose mountaintop mining. Verizon has not asked Massey Energy Corporation to remove it from the sponsor list, thus it is a sponsor despite its efforts to nuance the situation otherwise.

Thus our objection — and the objection of more than 81,000 people who contacted you — is not satisfied by the invocation of "local decision-making."

We are disturbed by your explanation that Verizon's interest was in the financial benefit of selling phone service to the rallyers, not in supporting the purpose of the rally. The entire concept of corporate responsibility — a concept your letter is at pains to assert — is grounded in rejecting the position that financial decisions should be made without consideration of how those decisions affect the environment. Invoking this belief, would Verizon sell phones at a rattlesnake roundup or a union-bashing parade? In short, your claims to corporate responsibility are directly contradicted by your assertion that having a profit motive justified supporting an anti-environmental rally.

We also note that at no time did Verizon ask Massey Energy Company to remove Verizon's name as a "sponsor" of the rally.

Finally, we would like to accept at face-value your assertion that Verizon "supports the goals of policy makers who are committed to reducing carbon emissions and protecting the environment." The position, however, is rather vague and, unlike the rally, does not really commit to any discernable policy. Does Verizon support the Environmental Protection Agency's current trajectory of regulating greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act? Does Verizon support enactment of new legislation to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by 80 to 100 percent? Does Verizon support the position of Dr. James Hansen, IPCC Chairman Dr. Rajendra Pachauri, and a growing chorus of scientists that atmospheric carbon dioxide must be reduced to 350 parts per million or less?

My fear, as I'm sure you can appreciate, is that Verizon is playing both sides of the debate: financially supporting a rally against reining in greenhouse gases, then *after the fact* telling environmentalists it supports the exact opposite agenda. Verizon could lay this fear to rest by clarifying exactly what positions it currently supports and pledging to consistently support those positions going forward.

This controversy began with my August 30 letter to you stating that we would cancel our Verizon phone service — informing our 225,000 supporters why — if Verizon did not withdraw from the rally. Verizon did not withdraw from the rally. However, out of respect for Verizon's current effort to distance itself from the rally and express some level of support for reducing greenhouse gas pollution, the Center for Biological Diversity will not unilaterally cancel our phone service. Instead, we'll provide a copy of your letter to our supporters and let them decide. It is their money that pays our phone bill. It is fitting to let them decide if Verizon's explanation is satisfactory.

Sincerely,



Kieran Suckling
Executive Director
Center for Biological Diversity