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## Verizon Explains Coal Rally Sponsorship

By *KATE GALBRAITH*

The cellphone carrier [Verizon Wireless](#) has explained its sponsorship of a coal industry rally in West Virginia earlier this month.

In a Sept. 12 [letter](#) to the [Center for Biological Diversity](#), the company's chief executive, Lowell McAdam, said that Verizon's payment of \$1,000 to support the "Friends of America" rally "certainly was not an expression of support for mountaintop removal coal mining or in opposition to climate legislation."

The money was provided, Mr. McAdam explained, as "a local decision focused on promoting our products at the event." Verizon, he added, "supports the goals of policy makers who are committed to reducing carbon emissions and protecting the environment."

Other [sponsors of the event](#) — whose Web site asks visitors to sign a petition against the Congressional bill aimed at combating global warming — consisted largely of coal and other energy companies.

The rally's goal, besides enjoying the music by Hank Williams Jr. and other performers, was to "learn how environmental extremists and corporate America are trying to destroy your jobs," according to Don Blankenship, the chief executive of the coal company [Massey Energy](#) (see video clip above).

Environmental groups are not entirely satisfied with Verizon's response. The Center for Biological Diversity said that it would [poll its members](#) as to whether it should replace Verizon as its cellphone carrier.

And Rob Perks, [blogging for the Natural Resources Defense Council](#), said that Verizon's statement was "a few days late and a thousand dollars short."