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## Verizon Wireless says rally sponsorship not endorsement

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CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- Verizon Wireless was a sponsor for the Friends of America rally in Logan County on Labor Day organized by Massey Energy CEO Don Blankenship.

The Center for Biological Diversity, a non-profit group based in Tuscon, Ariz., is part of a coalition of 47 conservation and religious groups that criticized Verizon for co-sponsoring the event.

Kieran Suckling, the Center's executive director, sent a letter on Sept. 4 to Verizon President Lowell C. McAdam, suggesting her organization might cancel its Verizon telephone services.

McAdam replied to Suckling last Thursday, stating Verizon's "decision to give \$1,000 to the event was a local decision focused on promoting our products at the event.

"It was not a statement of our position on any public-policy issue," McAdam wrote. "It certainly was not an expression of support for mountaintop removal coal mining or in opposition to the climate legislation."

At the Friends of America rally, Blankenship said he spent \$1 million to organize and pay for the event.

During the program, Blankenship criticized multinational corporations, political leaders from both parties and "environmental nuts" he accused of trying to ship American jobs overseas.

The Friends of America Rally Web site ([friendsofamericarally.com](http://friendsofamericarally.com)) lists Verizon Wireless as one of 116 co-sponsors of the event.

"Verizon supports the goals of policy makers who are committed to reducing carbon emissions and protecting the environment," McAdam wrote to Suckling.

Verizon is working "to facilitate major reduction of greenhouse gases" and to reduce "our own energy usage through innovative programs and technologies."

Suckling released McAdam's letter late Saturday, as well as her reply.

"We accept your statement that sponsorship of the rally was 'a local decision focused on promoting our products at the event,'" Suckling wrote.

Verizon has still "not asked Massey Energy Corp. to remove it from the sponsor list," she added.

More than 81,000 people sent messages to Verizon criticizing its sponsorship of the rally, as the result of an e-mail campaign by the Center for Biological Diversity and the coalition of 47 organizations.

"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," Suckling wrote to McAdam on Saturday.

Her letter added that she plans to send a copy of McAdam's letter to "our supporters and let them decide."

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