

Mitch McConnell's [website](#) trumpets that last fall he received an award from the Washington Coal Club "for his work to defend Kentucky's coal jobs, miners and their families." His concern for miners turns out not to be so deep. As the [Washington Post](#) reported last week, he single-handedly blocked a measure to rescue health and pension benefits for over a hundred thousand retired and disabled miners nationally.

It would be unfair to say that McConnell hasn't done *anything* for miners — he did support mine safety legislation after a major mining disaster. On the other hand, according to a [report](#) by the state department of energy, there are only 12,000 coal miners — about the same as the [number of car mechanics](#) — out of a population of 4.4 million, so it's not exactly a huge voting block. In the context of the pension rescue bill, McConnell seemed to be more interested in payback to the union that administers the fund for supporting his opponent in his last election than in the welfare of the miners themselves.

Given that the Washington Coal Club's award was for protecting coal miners, which doesn't seem to be a huge priority for McConnell, you might wonder a little about the nature of the Club. A look at its [webpage](#) shows that its officers are drawn from coal companies (Arch and Alpha Natural Resources), industry trade associations, and industry lobbyists. Not surprisingly, the coal industry has also been generous with its campaign contributions, as [CNBC](#) reported. When McConnell fulminates about the "war on coal," you have to question whether it's concern for the workers or the shareholders that is motivating his vehement opposition to environmental regulation.