Good afternoon. My name is Richard Koetting. I am the Business Manager of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 667 in Pueblo, Colorado. On behalf of the active members and retirees of Local 667, I thank you for this opportunity to testify regarding the EPA’s Clean Power Plan.

IBEW Local 667 is a utility local union that represents members at Black Hills Energy, San Isabel Electric Association, and Asplundh Tree Experts in job classifications ranging from customer service, to tree trimmers, to journeyman lineman and until December 31, 2012 - coal plant personnel.

I saw an article published in the Washington Post last week titled “The Cost of Climate Change – How not to shut down coal plants.” As a resident of Pueblo, the article really hit home for me and made me want to testify at this hearing even more – to caution the EPA - do not make the same mistakes Colorado has. The residential rate per kilowatt-hour for Black Hills Colorado Electric has risen about 26% since 2010. On a per-household basis, Pueblo and other community’s rates are now among the highest in the entire state.
Why this drastic change in electrical rates in Colorado? Years before the EPA began heavily regulating the coal industry, Colorado put into place Amendment 37 (2004), a 30% renewable energy standard for IOU’s, and HB 1365(2010), Clean Air Clean Jobs Act. While this shift of electric generation in the state from coal to renewables and natural gas has brought some good paying short-term jobs to the area, it does not come close to offsetting the economic effects of the loss of long-term jobs and the crazy increases in electric rates.

This drastic increase in electricity has hit my town of Pueblo extraordinarily hard. Pueblo is an area that is economically depressed, with over 22% living below the poverty rate! The increase in electricity prices has also been accompanied by widespread job loss. For every 1000 megawatts of power generated by a coal-fired plant, there are 250 jobs inside that plant. For every 1000 megawatts of power generated by natural gas, there are 50 jobs inside that plant. That is a stark difference. Black Hills Energy chose to replace almost all of its coal-fired plants with natural gas plants. Individuals have lost good, high-skilled, jobs. Communities have lost their tax base.

Quite simply, utility companies changing to comply with the Colorado standards have left the consumers paying the bill. It has kept many small businesses from hiring additional workers and real families have been left literally
in the dark, having to choose between heating their home and feeding their children.

The people of Colorado cannot afford to lose another coal-fired plant. I am here today to strongly caution the EPA against being so ambitious that it decides to fight the global problem of climate change on its own – requiring the entire US to go down the path Colorado has. A global climate change plan is needed – one that brings everyone to the table – one that requires every nation to make emission reductions. China and India have global emissions that grow every year. Without their commitment to reducing emissions and fighting climate change, these EPA regulations will only be doing the US and its citizens a disservice. The cost of electricity will rise, thousands will be left without jobs, and the strength of our electric grid will be diminished.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I respectfully suggest EPA reconsider the Clean Power Plan taking into account how aggressive standards have harmed the great state of Colorado.