

# “THE BENEFITS OF INCREASING ENERGY PRODUCTION”

Testimony to the Pennsylvania Senate Majority Policy Committee

Presented by:

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Friday, August 14, 2026 – 9:00 a.m.

Center for Education, Business & Arts – Shenandoah, Pennsylvania



# **Ri-Corp. Development, Inc.**

## ***Gilberton Power Company***

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Chairman Argall, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Alex Brush, and I am the General Manager of two local power producing Companies, the Gilberton Power Company and Schuylkill Energy Resources.

I want to speak today from the perspective of the two facilities we operate here in Schuylkill County, and about two things that I believe sometimes get lost in the broader energy discussion: **the need to preserve reliable power generation, and the unique environmental role our facilities play here in Pennsylvania's anthracite region.**

Between Gilberton and Schuylkill Energy Resources, we directly employ approximately **100 people**, along with approximately **45 employees of affiliated companies** who directly support our operations.

These are local, family-sustaining jobs. And beyond those employees are contractors, truck drivers, equipment suppliers, engineering companies, service providers and other local businesses that depend on our facilities. Our plants are undoubtedly important members of the local economy and tax base.

But our importance to the region goes far beyond employment and economics.

Together, Gilberton and Schuylkill Energy Resources generate **168 Megawatts of net electric power.**

These are facilities designed to run **24 hours a day, seven days a week.**

Over their almost forty year operating history, both plants have achieved a **91 percent lifetime capacity factor.** That number matters.

It means these are not theoretical generating resources or facilities that may someday be available. They are proven generating assets that have been producing electricity reliably for decades. At that level of generation, our two plants produce roughly enough electricity annually to serve the equivalent of about **125,000 to 150,000 Pennsylvania homes.** That's roughly SCHUYLKILL plus CARBON plus NORTHUMBERLAND counties! To put it another way, almost half a million people keep the lights on because of our two little facilities.

And reliability is becoming increasingly important. Electricity demand is growing, while dependable generating plants across the region continue to retire. The electric grid does not only need megawatts on paper. It needs generating facilities that can actually be available when demand is highest.

Our facilities can operate during a February cold snap, during a July heat wave, overnight, and during extended periods when weather-dependent resources may not be producing at their full capability.



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That does not mean one type of generation should replace another. Pennsylvania must maintain a diverse generation mix. We need more energy generation, and we need all types. We need it yesterday.

But it does mean that **existing dispatchable generation has real value and should not be taken for granted**. We are proud to be a PJM Capacity Resource, and have the pleasant but rare distinction of having a track record of **100% availability** during PJM Capacity Action events. When the grid needs us, we are there. We perform when it matters and when many others don't.

Once a facility like ours closes, replacing that reliability is not as simple as replacing the same number of nameplate megawatts somewhere else.

And here in the anthracite region, our plants provide something else that is just as important. They help address an environmental problem that was created generations ago.

Anyone who grew up or lives in this part of Pennsylvania understands what culm banks and abandoned mine lands are.

These are not newly mined fuels created for our facilities. They are the remnants of historic anthracite mining—coal refuse that was separated from marketable coal and left behind in enormous piles throughout communities like ours, often many decades before modern environmental laws existed.

Those piles are part of the landscape of the anthracite region, but they are also a legacy environmental liability. That's why Pennsylvania has correctly recognized the need for our types of plants, and has been supportive of our industry in the form of the performance-based tax credit as well as the inclusion in the PA Alternative Energy Portfolio (AEP) as Tier 2, preferred, clean power.

These piles which we use as fuel contribute to acid mine drainage, sedimentation, degraded waterways, fugitive dust, constant air emissions from continuing smoldering and incomplete combustion, as well as a number of other smaller impacts to surrounding land, air, and water... in OUR communities.

Our facilities give that legacy material a productive end use.

Between Gilberton and Schuylkill Energy Resources, we can consume approximately **7,800 tons of coal refuse every day**—roughly 2,600 tons per day at one facility and 5,200 tons per day at the other.

We take material that has already been mined and abandoned, recover useful energy from it in our circulating fluidized-bed boilers, and then use the resulting ash as an integral part of the reclamation process.

Together, our facilities produce approximately **4,900 tons per day of DEP-certified beneficial-use ash** at those operating levels.



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That ash is not simply discarded. Because of the limestone used in our combustion and emissions-control process, the ash is alkaline and has properties that make it ideal for mine-land reclamation. Beneficial-use ash is returned to permitted reclamation sites where, alongside PA DEP, we work tirelessly on reclamation- the material is used to fill, grade, physically and chemically stabilize and reclaim mining-affected areas.

So our environmental role has two sides.

**We remove the legacy coal refuse that creates environmental problems, and we produce a material that helps complete the reclamation and further solves the problem.**

That is an unusual environmental cycle.

The source material is removed from old mining areas.

Electricity is produced from it, benefitting everyone who turns on the lights.

The resulting beneficial-use ash goes back into reclamation.

Land and water that have been impaired by historic mining can be restored rather than simply leaving the problem for yet another generation—or leaving the environmental burden entirely to taxpayers.

This is particularly important in the anthracite region because the legacy of mining here is so extensive.

Our communities benefited tremendously from anthracite mining for generations, but they were also left with the environmental consequences of mining practices that occurred long before today's standards existed.

Facilities like Gilberton Power and Schuylkill Energy provide a practical way to continue cleaning up that legacy while producing something Pennsylvania increasingly needs: **reliable electricity**. That unique combination is what makes these facilities entirely different from “other plants.”

We are generating power while performing an environmental service to the community, its residents, and the Commonwealth.

We are converting an historic environmental liability into useful energy and then using the byproduct to remediate the problem.

And we are doing that while supporting local jobs, local businesses and providing an invaluable tax base for communities that have lived with the effects of historic mining for generations.

I recognize that there are people who have concerns about facilities like ours, and I respect that.



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We are heavily regulated facilities, and we understand that environmental compliance is part of our responsibility to the communities where we operate. We take that responsibility extremely seriously and always strive for continuous compliance with all regulatory requirements.

I would ask that our facilities be evaluated based on the **complete environmental and energy picture**. If one considers the whole picture they quickly come to the same conclusion as those of us in this unique little industry: we need more of generators. The fuel is abundant, the environmental problems will persist in perpetuity otherwise, and the need for more energy is urgent, to put it mildly.

If Gilberton Power or Schuylkill Energy Resources close, or are forced to reduce operations due to cost, Pennsylvania does not merely lose megawatts.

It loses reliable, around-the-clock generating capacity.

It loses local jobs and economic activity.

And here in the anthracite region, it also loses the only established viable mechanism for removing thousands of tons per day of legacy coal refuse and producing beneficial-use material for continued mine-land reclamation.

Those benefits are connected.

My request to the General Assembly is simple: as Pennsylvania plans for increasing electricity demand and the future of its electric grid, **protect the reliable generating assets that are already here and recognize the unique environmental work being performed by coal-refuse facilities in the anthracite region.**

We do need new generation in Pennsylvania. It would be wise of us to consider our successes and shortfalls, and wiser still to build on the tremendous success we've already demonstrated. There should be more facilities using waste as fuel, not fewer.

We need to preserve the dependable generation we already have—particularly when that generation is simultaneously solving an environmental problem that has existed in our communities for more than a century.

Gilberton Power Company and Schuylkill Energy Resources have been doing both for nearly **four decades**. We are proud of our accomplishments to date, and we look forward to continuing to serve the community for the next four decades.

Additional generation is most certainly needed. Why not fuel the future by further reclaiming the past?

Thank you for the opportunity to deliver these remarks.