

Save Our Solar Rally

Speech by Dan Conant

Founder and CEO of Solar Holler

Good afternoon, y'all! It's awesome to see so many friendly faces; neighbors, colleagues.

I know you could have been anywhere in the world today; playing with your kids or grandkids; hiking in the woods; hanging with friends. But you chose to be here today to protect your family's rights; our neighbors, our towns and hollers, and the future of West Virginia.

You know, for 250 years, West Virginia has been taken advantage of. For 250 years, we've gotten the short end of the stick. Our trees and our mountains were taken from us. Our limbs and our lungs were taken from us.

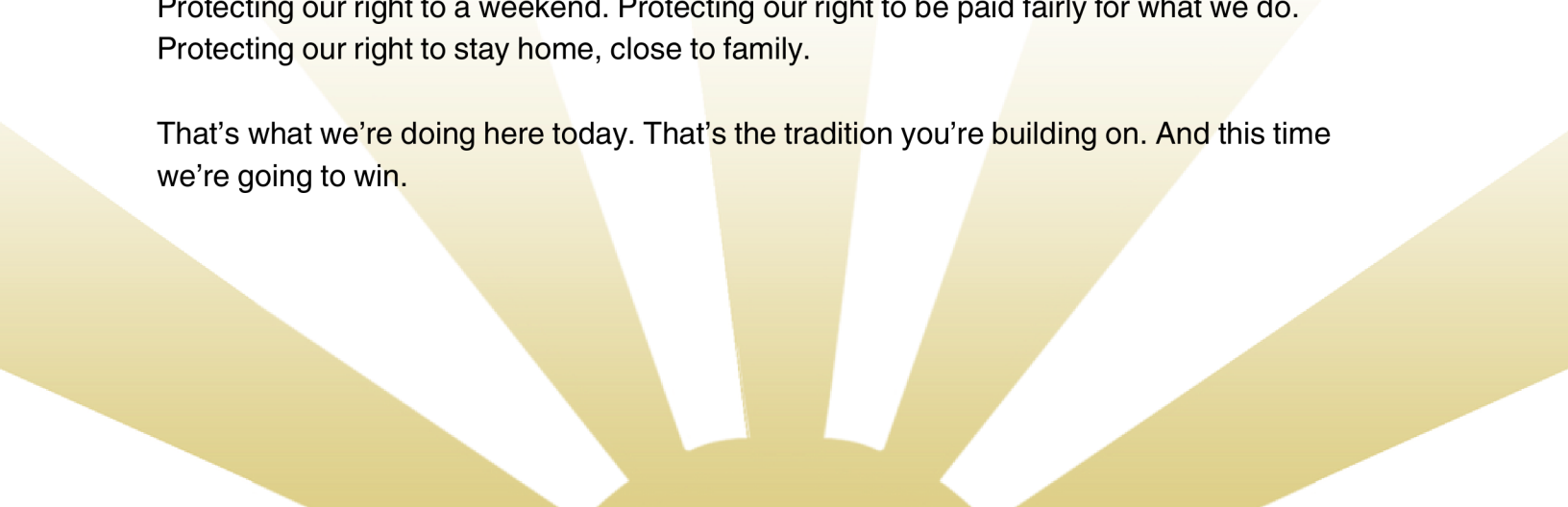
We built New York. We built America. We built the industrialized world. But that wealth didn't stay here. It got taken from us. It got shipped off to Ohio, and to Virginia, and then to New York and beyond. And that's been happening for 250 years.

So when FirstEnergy said they wanted to cheat families and churches and farms this past summer; they had 250 years of tradition behind them. When FirstEnergy slipped \$60 million into legislators pockets in Ohio—\$60 million that they took from West Virginians and families across Appalachia—they were building on 250 years of tradition.

For generations; we've been paid cents on the dollar. We've shipped countless train cars of coal, and steel, and the building blocks of the world out on our rails. And gotten paid cents on the dollar. And then we got laughed at. We got looked down on. We got called hillbillies. They told us to move away to make something of ourselves, even though we made them.

But you know what tradition has lasted just as long? We've been pushing back for 250 years. Protecting our right to organize. Protecting our right to keep 10 fingers and 10 toes. Protecting our right to a weekend. Protecting our right to be paid fairly for what we do. Protecting our right to stay home, close to family.

That's what we're doing here today. That's the tradition you're building on. And this time we're going to win.



What FirstEnergy demanded was wrong. They asked us to put panels on your roof; but wanted you to give the electricity to them for half of what it was worth. They once again went out of their way to take what wasn't theirs—our energy; our jobs; our livelihoods; our sweat and our tears—and make it theirs.

We won't do it. We simply won't do it.

You know what'll happen if we don't put up with it? We'll build the next great American industry. And we'll own it this time. It's West Virginians who are going to own the power plants; not Wall Street. It's West Virginians who are going to make the batteries and own them. It's West Virginians who are going to make solar panels, and the steel, and the silicon. Just like West Virginian coal built the America of the 20th Century; West Virginia sand is going to build the 21st.

We've already been building that industry and doing it right for once. We've got 400 families across West Virginia that eat and play and put their kids through college today because of solar. We've got thousands of families who make their own power today. But we've got hundreds of thousands of families to go. I want every family in West Virginia to benefit from this. I want us all to own the power plants. I want every kid who grows up in West Virginia like I did to go to a solar powered school. I want everyone who goes to church to spend their Sunday morning under a solar array.

That's why we're here today. To ask our legislators to once again stand up to the outsiders trying to shut down a home grown industry. To ask our legislators to protect our families; our workers; and the future of our state. I know they will, if we demand it from them.

So my ask for all of us in this room today is to ask your delegates and ask your senator to protect solar; to tell FirstEnergy to leave us alone; and to join in our 250 year tradition of pushing back.

Thank you to each and every one of you for being here today. I love you.

