

THE COAL TRAP

Between 2009 and 2019, West Virginian politicians aligned themselves with the interests of the coal industry to the substantial detriment of the citizens and economy of the state. Despite the undeniable low-carbon transformation that was occurring in the energy industry in the US during this period, state political leaders doubled down on coal. Rather than provide the leadership necessary to manage the transition of the state's economic drivers away from fossil fuels, they largely blamed the demise of the coal industry on the federal government. At every turn, the interests of the coal industry were placed above the economic and environmental health of West Virginians. James Van Nostrand tells the story of why West Virginia now faces overwhelming obstacles to competing in the economic marketplace of the twenty-first century. The book serves as a warning of how a fair energy transition can be derailed by political failure.

James M. Van Nostrand is the Charles M. Love, Jr. Endowed Professor of Law at West Virginia University College of Law and Director of its Center for Energy and Sustainable Development. He has forty years' experience in a variety of roles in the energy industry, including positions as a regulator, energy lawyer, and director of a New York-based environmental nongovernmental organization.

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HOW WEST VIRGINIA WAS LEFT BEHIND IN THE CLEAN
ENERGY REVOLUTION

JAMES M. VAN NOSTRAND

West Virginia University College of Law



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This book is dedicated to my father, Maurice A. Van Nostrand (1925–91)

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