

July 30, 2010

Dear Representative:

I am writing to urge you to support new legislation to improve our job safety and health laws (HR 5663).

Since the Mine Safety and Health Act (MSHA) and the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) were passed 40 years ago, our country has made great progress toward providing every American worker a safe workplace. But much more needs to be done.

Every day, 14 workers die on the job, and nearly 13,000 are injured or sickened. Deaths on the job for Hispanic workers were recently at an all-time high. They are over 10 percent more likely to be killed on the job, and serious injuries continue to increase in some major industries.

The proposed Miner Safety and Health Act honors the memory of those who have died at work by strengthening our workplace safety and health law and adopting critical reforms:

- *Giving MSHA new, credible powers to stop persistent violators*, including increased inspections, mandatory evacuation of miners, and mandatory and concrete plans requiring management to fix both violations and management's own failures.
- *Updating monetary penalties* which have been unchanged for decades.
- *Requiring employers covered by OSHA to fix serious hazards even while they are appealing OSHA's findings and penalties* (already required under MSHA).
- *Stopping supervisor retaliation against workers and updating worker whistleblower protections*, by incorporating successful procedures already included in other federal laws.
- *Holding corporate officers personally and criminally liable for their own knowing violations of OSHA standards in cases involving death or injury.*
- *Giving workers' families the right to meet with OSHA investigators.*

And after 40 years of weak penalties, the Act will finally *allow prosecutors to issue felony charges against employers who knowingly violate MSHA and OSHA standards*. OSHA penalties have not been changed for years and currently provide that a willful violation that causes a worker's death is chargeable only as a misdemeanor despite the felony provisions of federal laws protecting the environment.

I believe that you care about protecting America's workers, and hope you will strongly support this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Anna Burger
Chair