



Leo W. Gerard
International President

July 20, 2010

VIA FAX

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative:

I am writing on behalf of the 850,000 members of the United Steelworkers (USW) to request your support for and co-sponsorship of HR 5663, the Miner Safety and Health Act of 2010 to improve safety and health protections for all workers. Through Chairman Miller's leadership, HR 5663 extends beyond miner safety and health and includes provisions from HR 2607, the Protecting America's Workers Act.

The need for improvements in underground and surface mine safety and health are clear and evident. The testimony offered to the House Education and Labor Committee on July 13, 2010, provided ample examples of the deficiencies in the existing mine safety and health system. Equally important are the provisions of HR 5663 that extend beyond mine safety and health to provide necessary and needed improvements to the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHAct) of 1970.


Critically important is the provision to prevent litigation from delaying the abatement of safety hazards. This is a provision already in the Mine Act and employers can seek a stay if they can prove workers' safety will not be compromised. Stronger whistleblower protections, increased criminal penalties when workers are killed due to safety violations, updated civil penalties and greater rights for workers and their families to meet with OSHA are other necessary improvements.

There is no argument that the OSHAct has done much to protect workers, improve workplace safety, and save workers' lives. However, the OSHAct is nearly 40 years old and contains major gaps. HR 5663 does much to bridge these gaps and will have an immediate impact on worker safety and health.

The highly publicized recent fatalities at the Upper Big Branch Mine, the Tesoro Refinery (our USW members) in Washington State and the Deepwater Horizon oil rig are only a fraction of the fatalities that occur each year in America's

workplaces. Focusing on improving the health and safety of only one group of workers in response to these disasters would be wrong and we urge your continued commitment to including enhanced workplace protections for all workers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leo W. Gerard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "L".

Leo W. Gerard
International President

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