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2181 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
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April 30, 2010

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Open Letter to the Nation's Mine Owners:

During the past month our nation has witnessed four mine tragedies, including the Upper Big Branch mine explosion, which killed 29 miners, the death of one miner at the Beckley Pocahontas Mine, the death of a contract worker at M-Class Mining, and two deaths at the Dotiki Mine today. Sadly, each of these tragedies was preventable.

In the name of tens of thousands of miners and their families who put their lives on the line every day, we call on mine operators to make the safety and health of their workers their top priority.

In addition to these recent tragedies, the number of mine citations for serious violations has skyrocketed, revealing a dangerous pattern of neglect and failure of commitment by too many operators to comply with the nation's mine safety laws. Spot inspections just completed by the Mine Safety and Health Administration at 57 coal mines found 1,436 violations and resulted in a staggering 105 closure orders.

The government does not have sufficient resources to be at every mine every day. Mine operators must take responsibility for ensuring the safety of their employees.

Today, we call on all of the country's mine operators to take actions and responsibility immediately to ensure their operations are actively in compliance with all mine safety laws; that adequate resources are being allocated to mine safety; and that managers and employees have full confidence that they may report dangers internally or to regulators without any fear of retaliation or penalty.

We request that non-union mines give their employees and their families an opportunity to meet with management to suggest additional safety measures and to report dangerous or potentially dangerous conditions. We request that union mine owners do the same with their unions, and work with them to monitor and develop additional safety procedures as needed.

We also request that each mine employee be given a card in the next three days with MSHA's toll free number so they can confidentially report potential hazards in the event they fear retaliation.


In the coming weeks Congress will be working on reforms to the Mine Act to close enforcement loopholes, strengthen MSHA's oversight and provide more federal resources to close the growing backlog of citation appeals.

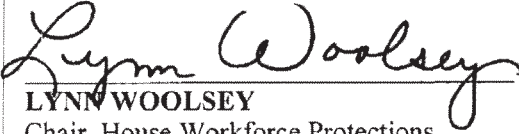
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We urge the mining industry to drop its historic record of opposing critical mine safety improvements and instead work with Congress and the Obama Administration to pass overdue reforms.

We look forward to hearing through the mine associations on what specific actions each mine operator is taking in response to this letter.

Sincerely,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
GEORGE MILLER  
Chair, House Education and Labor Committee

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
LYNN WOOLSEY  
Chair, House Workforce Protections  
Subcommittee