

Partner
Organizations

September 13, 2010



Honorable George Miller
Chairman
Committee on Education and Labor
US House of Representatives
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515



Dear Chairman Miller:



Recent workplace disasters, including the explosion of BP's Deepwater Horizon oil rig, the explosion in the Massey Upper Big Branch mine in West Virginia, and the fire at the Tesoro Refinery in Anacortes, Washington, have cost the lives of 47 men and women. These 47 and the 5,000 other Americans who die as a result of workplace accidents and illnesses every year demonstrate the urgent need to add new federal protections for the safety and health of American workers.



The BlueGreen Alliance, with its 11 labor and environmental partners uniting more than eight and a half million members and supporters, urges the House of Representatives to pass H.R. 5663, the Robert C. Byrd Miner Safety and Health Act of 2010(MSHA). This legislation, with its enhanced inspection, investigation and enforcement authority and new standards for mine safety, as well as the increased civil and criminal penalties for mine owners who violate health and safety laws, is a well-designed effort to further protect America's miners.



We also strongly support Title VII of this legislation and its provisions from the Protecting America's Workers Act (PAWA) that are focused on increased civil and criminal penalties, expanded protection for whistleblowers, and added rights for victims and their families. These are important and necessary components of a modernized and strengthened Occupational Safety and Health law. Currently, under OSHA, the maximum criminal penalty for willful violations resulting in fatality is \$10,000, while the maximum penalty for killing an endangered species is \$13,000. Especially important is the provision in Section 307 that clarifies that employers must abate serious, willful, and repeat violations while they contest the citations for the original violations.



The BlueGreen Alliance would like to thank you for the introduction of H.R. 5663, the Robert C. Byrd Miner Safety and Health Act of 2010. This is an integral step towards improving the working lives of the American people and with your leadership we will continue to rally support in Congress.



Sincerely,

David Foster
Executive Director

