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Building and Construction Trades Department

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July 13, 2010

The Honorable George Miller, Chairman
Committee on Education & Labor
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Miller:

On behalf of the Building and Construction Trades Department AFL-CIO, its 13 affiliated unions and their 2.5 million members, we urge you to support the Miner Safety and Health Act HR 5663 and seek its immediate consideration by the Congress.

The recent tragedies at the Big Branch Mine in West Virginia and the Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf serve to underscore the need for stronger and more rigorous enforcement of safety and health laws governing both the mining and general industry sectors of the economy. Unsafe workplaces whether in mining, construction, manufacturing, transportation, agriculture or service industries are taking an unacceptable toll on the lives of American workers.

Despite improvements in workplace safety and health, some 15 American workers die each day from injuries sustained at work, and 134 die from work-related diseases. Of those killed every day, nearly 4 work in the construction industry. Indeed, construction has the dubious distinction of being the single most hazardous industry in the United States accounting for some 1,200-construction workers killed on the job each year.

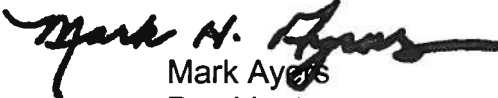
H.R. 5663 not only provides for a wide range of necessary enforcement and worker rights improvements in the Mine Safety & Health Act of 1977, but also includes important provisions to strengthen enforcement and worker rights under the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

Specifically, the OSHA provisions strengthen whistleblower protections, increases criminal penalties where workers are killed due to a safety violation, updates civil penalties that have not been increased since 1990, prevents litigation from delaying the correction of safety & health hazards, and provides greater rights for victims of accidents and their family members to participate in proceedings under the OSHA Act.

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Given the shortened legislative calendar for this Congress, we believe that a single bill addressing both MSHA and OSHA enforcement issues is an appropriate legislative response to the on going safety & health crisis in the American workplace. We therefore, urge you to support HR 5663 and its expeditious consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark H. Ayers", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark Ayers
President

cc: United States House of Representatives