

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR AND CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS



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LEGISLATIVE ALERT!

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January 15, 2008

Dear Representative:

The AFL-CIO strongly urges you to vote for the Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response Act, the "S-MINER Act" (H.R. 2768), which addresses critical safety and health problems in the mining industry that continue to put the lives of the nation's miners at risk.

Over the past few years, the country has witnessed a series of tragic mining disasters, starting with the Sago mine disaster in January 2006, followed by other mining tragedies, including those at the Arocoma, Darby, and Crandall Canyon mines. Since the Sago disaster, 82 coal miners and 57 metal and non-metal miners have lost their lives on the job.

Each of these disasters has identified and highlighted major gaps and deficiencies in the protections afforded miners. Insufficient emergency oxygen, lack of communication and tracking devices, lack of refuge chambers, inadequate mine seals, use of flammable conveyor belts and belt air for ventilation, and dangerous retreat mining practices have all contributed to the deaths of miners. In addition, black lung disease is on the rise, and oversight of the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) has found that MSHA has failed to address important health problems – including exposure to asbestos, toxic chemicals, and coal dust.

In June 2006, in response to Sago and other mine disasters, Congress enacted the Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response Act (the "MINER Act"). The MINER Act was an important first step in addressing some of the urgent gaps in mine safety protections. But it was just a first step. The S-MINER Act is a comprehensive bill that builds on the foundation set in the MINER Act. It will further improve emergency response and put in place much-needed protections to prevent disasters and protect workers from crippling injuries and diseases.

Congress should act now to help prevent further deaths, injuries, and diseases among the nation's miners. The AFL-CIO urges you to support and vote for the S-MINER Act (H.R. 2768). to support the manager's amendment, and to oppose any weakening amendments or motions to recommit that will delay action.

Sincerely,

William Samuel, Director
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT