

# United Mine Workers of America

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U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

We write to urge your support for **H. R. 2768, the Supplemental Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response Act ("S-MINER Act")**, which the House Education and Labor Committee approved last fall. This bill offers the nation's miners important health and safety protections that are designed to *prevent* crippling diseases and work-related injuries. It builds on the MINER Act, which passed in 2006 after several multi-fatal coal mining accidents graphically demonstrated severe shortcomings in the response to mine emergencies. Whereas the MINER Act focused on the post-accident setting, H. R. 2768 is designed to *prevent accidents and illnesses* from arising in the first place. This is an excellent bill and will provide much-needed protections for coal miners.

The S-MINER Act represents the first piece of legislation in over thirty years – since the enactment of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977 (Mine Act) – to focus on preventing mining accidents and illnesses. Note that since disaster struck at the Sago mine on January 2, 2006, **81 coal miners** have died in coal mining incidents.

Less than two months after Committee Chairman George Miller first introduced H. R. 2768 in June 2007, tragedy struck at the Crandall Canyon Mine in Utah where nine miners were killed – including three brave would-be rescuers who were killed while attempting to rescue six miners trapped underground. Among the numerous protections included in this bill are several designed to protect miners from the dangers associated with the particular mining procedure in use at the Crandall Canyon mine when that disaster struck (e.g. requiring MSHA's focused oversight and pre-approval for mining plans, and educating the workers about the inherent dangers associated with retreat mining immediately prior to their beginning to perform any such work). It also provides for reduced exposures to the deadly coal dust that causes pneumoconiosis – which disease rates are on the rise, and provides an on-going process for updating exposure limits for harmful and toxic substances commonly used in the mining process. Further, the bill incorporates many of the recommendations recently issued by the independent Technical Study Panel, which the 2006 MINER Act created to study belt air and belt flammability.

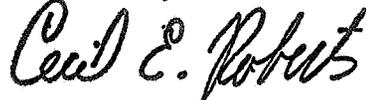
Passage of the S-MINER Act by the House Education and Labor Committee demonstrated that the Committee appreciated that Congress has further work to do to make mines safer places to work. The Committee members accomplished this despite strong opposition from those who claim – incorrectly – that enough has already been done to address miners' health and safety.

As the largest Union in the Nation representing the health and safety interests of coal miners, the United Mine Workers of America strongly supports the S-MINER Act. We urge you to support this legislation when it comes before the full House. Your support of H.R. 2768 will help stop the coalfield carnage we have witnessed for far too long. If made in order, we also urge Members to support the Manager's amendment to the bill and oppose any motion to re-commit which will delay action on this critically needed safety and health legislation.

Miners need your help now, before we bear witness to even more needless disasters. As long as miners continue to die in the Nation's mines we cannot be satisfied with the status quo.

In advance and in anticipation of your help, and on behalf of the United Mine Workers of America, I thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cecil E. Roberts". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cecil E. Roberts

cc: Daniel J. Kane, UMWA International Secretary Treasurer  
John Sweeney, President, AFL-CIO  
Richard L. Trumka, Secretary-Treasurer, AFL-CIO  
The Honorable Robert C. Byrd  
The Honorable Ted Kennedy  
The Honorable Jay Rockefeller