



For Immediate Release

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Thursday, June 15, 2006

***PRESIDENT BUSH SIGNS SWEEPING MINE SAFETY REFORM
BILL INTO LAW; FIRST MINE SAFETY REFORM IN 28 YEARS***

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, and Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA), the Committee's Ranking Member, today praised President Bush for signing into law the first major overhaul of mine safety laws in 28 years - a sweeping bill that will reduce safety risks for miners across the country in response to the tragedies in West Virginia and Kentucky early this year.

The bill, the "Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response Act of 2006" (MINER Act), S. 2803, approved unanimously by the Senate on May 24th, adopts a range of new regulations that reflect the demands of today's workplace and promote use of world-class, 21st Century technologies aimed at reducing safety risks to the nation's coal miners. The House passed the bill on June 7 by a vote of 381 to 37.

"The tragic loss of lives in coal mines this year brought together leaders from labor unions, the mining industry and government, and helped forge a commitment to change the laws governing mine safety" Enzi said. "Republicans and Democrats - all of us - understand that no aspect of mining is more important than protecting the health and safety of those whose hard work fuels mining industry. The MINER Act, which is now law, reflects that bipartisan commitment."

Senator Kennedy said: "This historic legislation will provide dramatic and long overdue improvements in mine safety. The families of the brave miners who died this year became the conscience of the nation, inspiring us to try to make the nation's mines the safest in the world. We owe all miners and their families nothing less."

The bill was originally cosponsored by Senator Kennedy, Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-WV), Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV), Employment and Workplace Safety Subcommittee Chairman Senator Johnny Isakson (R-GA), the Subcommittee's Ranking Member Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), Senator Rick Santorum (R-PA), and Senator Mike DeWine (R-OH).

"As Chairman of the HELP Committee, I am pleased that the President has acted so quickly to ensure that such tragedies will not be repeated. Mining, and coal mining in particular, is vital to our national and local economies, and to our national energy security,"

Enzi said. “I am deeply grateful for the cooperation and support of my distinguished cosponsors on this bill who have worked tirelessly to make these improvements a reality,” he added.

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