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STATEMENT BY SENATOR KENNEDY ON WORKER'S MEMORIAL DAY

Today is Workers' Memorial Day, a time for the nation to pause and pay tribute to workers across America who have died or been injured on the job in the past year.

Every year over 5,000 workers are killed on the job and nearly 5 million others become ill or are injured. In 2005 in Massachusetts alone, 78 workers were killed and 51,900 were seriously injured or became ill.

This problem is not getting better. In 2004, the rate of worker deaths increased for the first time since 1992. Now, four months into 2006, it has already been a troubling year. Earlier this month, here in Boston, scaffolding collapsed and killed two workers and a bystander. In West Virginia, the Sago and Alma Mine disasters left 14 families without husbands, fathers, and brothers. Twenty-six miners have been killed this year in the nation's coal mines – more than in all of last year.

- □□□□□ It's unacceptable that mine safety in America lags decades behind the rest of the world, when so many of our miners are suffering and dying.
- □□□□□ It's unacceptable that the Administration is rolling back worker safety rules, when our first responders, healthcare, and agricultural workers face the imminent threat of deadly avian flu.
- □□□□□ It's unacceptable that more Hispanics are dying on the job than ever before.
- □□□□□ It's unacceptable that we have an Administration which cares more about tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans than the lives of American workers.

It's unacceptable that so many workers across the country are forced to struggle every day just to stay alive and healthy on the job. That's why I'm fighting for OSHA reform legislation to strengthen protections for workers on the job, and for legislation to reform our nation's mine safety laws. The danger is obvious, and these basic reforms are long overdue.

The best possible way to honor the many hard-working Americans who have been injured or killed on the job this year is to act now to make our mines and workplaces safe.

On this special day, we take our inspiration from the eloquent words of Mother Jones, who fought so valiantly for coal miners – "Mourn for the dead, and fight for the living" and we intend to win this fight!

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