

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4802

April 12, 2010

The Honorable Tom R. Harkin
Chairman
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael B. Enzi
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Enzi,

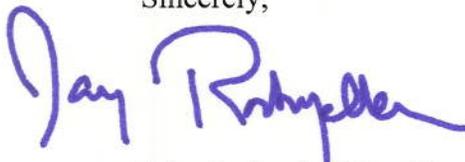
I am writing to formally request that the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) hold a series of hearings on coal mine safety, including the cause(s) of the Upper Big Branch mine disaster, and launch an oversight investigation into all mine safety citations issued to underground coal mines across the country. Four years ago, following the tragedies of Sago and Aracoma, I was honored to work closely with the Members of this Committee to pass the bipartisan MINER Act. This legislation took important steps in updating the 1977 MINE Act, and led to increased mine safety enforcement, and the development of new mine safety technology.

However, last week's incident at the Upper Big Branch mine in Montcoal, West Virginia, shows that coal mining remains an unacceptably dangerous profession. Currently, West Virginians are mourning the 29 miners who lost their lives in this disaster.

I know that all Americans join me in wanting answers to what caused this heartbreaking loss of life. I look forward to working with you and the Members of the HELP Committee to investigate the Upper Big Branch disaster, so that we can understand what caused this accident and what actions need to be taken to prevent future tragedies.

I deeply appreciate your leadership and our continued work together to improve mine safety through federal legislation and oversight. We must make sure mine disasters become a thing of the past.

Sincerely,



John D. Rockefeller IV