


United Support and Memorial for Workplace Fatalities

MEDIA RELEASE

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LAS VEGAS, Nevada and LEXINGTON, Kentucky - United Support and Memorial for Workplace Fatalities (USMWF) urges the U.S. House and Senate to move quickly to pass the reforms introduced today to improve federal worker safety laws. H.R. 5663 was introduced by Cong. George Miller (D-CA) chair of the House Education and Labor Committee. "Families who have lost a loved one because of unsafe working conditions have been shut out of the process for far too long," said Tammy Miser, founder of USMWF. "This bill will shine a light on the process and offer a measure of fairness to the parents, spouses and siblings of workers killed or seriously injured on the job." Ms. Miser testified before Congress in March 2008 and described how her brother Shawn Boone, 33, suffered and eventually died from severe burns sustained at the Hayes-Lemmerz plant in Huntington, IN from an aluminum dust explosion. It took her family years to learn what happened at the plant and all that the official investigations uncovered.

USMWF strongly supports the bill's goals of putting some teeth in the OSH Act by prohibiting employers from gaming the system through litigation to avoid correcting safety hazards found by OSHA inspectors. "Employers who put workers lives at risk should be held accountable for their actions, including much stiffer penalties and the possibility of jail time," said Debi Koehler-Fergen whose son Travis Koehler, 26, and another worker, Richard Luzier, 48, were asphyxiated by toxic gases while working for Boyd Gaming at The Orleans Hotel in Las Vegas, NV. USMWF also strongly supports Congresswoman Dina Titus' H.R. 4864 to improve oversight of State-run OSHA programs.

H.R. 5663 includes a number of new protections for mine workers, stringent requirements for employers in the mining industry, and independent investigations of mine disasters. It also will modernize whistleblower protections for workers who raise concerns about safety and health, and require OSHA civil penalty amounts to be adjusted for inflation. "Most worker deaths happen one at a time and never make a newspaper headline. In a year when workplace fatalities made the front page, we're encouraged to see Members of Congress recognize that the OSH Act is 40 years old and needs to be strengthened," said Peter Dooley, MS, CIH, CSP a labor safety consultant and advisor to USMWF.

USMWF is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to supporting family members who have lost loved ones from workplace hazards and employers' disregard for workers' lives. USMWF promotes family involvement, transparency and fairness in the investigative systems; supports improvement in health and safety protections and workers' compensation; and puts a human face on worker fatalities.