

## President Bush Signs S.2803, the MINER Act of 2006

Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building  
Room 450

11:23 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks for coming. Welcome to the White House and thank you for witnessing this bill signing ceremony. In a few moments, I'm going to sign into law the most sweeping overhaul of federal mine safety law in nearly three decades. The MINER Act of 2006 has strong support of mine workers and the mining industry, and it was overwhelmingly passed by the Congress. I want to thank the members of the United States Congress who have joined us here for their hard work on this important measure. (Applause.)



VIDEO Multimedia

President's Remarks

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I want to thank the Secretary of Labor, Elaine Chao, who has joined us. I appreciate the Governors from three important coal mining states, Joe Manchin, Ernie Fletcher, and Ed Rendell, for joining us here, as well. I was struck by how the governors handled the tragedies of the mine incidents. I thought they were able to convey a deep sense of compassion in an attempt to heal hearts. And I thank them for their courage.



I appreciate Bill Frist, who has joined us, and Mitch McConnell, members of the United States Senate, as well as Mike Enzi, Senator Ted Kennedy. I'm particularly thrilled that Senator Robert Byrd is here. (Applause.) I don't know if you know this, but last Monday he achieved a milestone, and that is, he has served longer in the United States Senate than any other senator in our nation's history, and he's served with distinction. And we're glad you're here, Senator. Thank you for coming. (Applause.)

I thank Majority Leader John Boehner for joining us, as well as Congressman Buck McKeon and Shelley Moore Capito, Hal Rogers, Rick Boucher from Virginia. I appreciate all the members of Congress who've joined us. I appreciate the leaders of the mining industry. I appreciate the workers who are here. Thanks for taking time in your day to come.

I want to welcome the families of those who mourn the loss of life. We share in your grief, and we honor the memories of your loved ones. I know it's hard. It's really hard for you. But we welcome you here. And we're honored you took time to be here.

I appreciate members of my administration who have joined us, as well, today. The hard work of American miners provides us with really important fuel. This economy is growing because of the work of our miners. Coal is an important part of our nation's present and future.

Thanks to modern technology and equipment, we've come a long way from the days when a miner would take a canary into the coal mines. Passage -- and since the passage of the Mine Safety and Health Act in '77 -- 1977, America has seen significant decreases of injuries and fatal mining accidents.

Yet events in recent months have reminded us that mining is dangerous work. That's what we've seen. This year alone, accidents have taken the lives of 33 miners in our country. Just last month, five miners were killed in a mine explosion in Harlan County, Kentucky. And in January, Americans watched and prayed -- a lot of Americans prayed -- with the people of West Virginia for the 13 miners that were trapped underground by the explosion in the Sago mine. Only one man came out, and he's with us today -- Randal McCloy, and his wife, Anna. And we welcome you all. (Applause.)

And we know -- we know, and I hope you know -- that your fallen mining brothers are with us here today in spirit. They're with us today with their loved ones here -- eyes wet with tears, but proud of their accomplishments. We're glad you're here.

We honor the memory of all lost miners today; that's what we're doing signing this bill. We make this promise to American miners and their families: We'll do



everything possible to prevent mine accidents and make sure you're able to return safely to your loved ones.

The bill I'm about to sign is an important part of the effort. The MINER Act will build on the Mine Safety and Health Administration's ongoing efforts to enhance mine safety training, to improve safety and communications technology for miners and provide more emergency supplies of breathable air along escape routes.

This new legislation will require mine operators to report any life-threatening accident no later than 15 minutes after they know that one has occurred. And to ensure compliance with the law, the MINER Act will increase the maximum penalty for flagrant violations of mine safety regulations nearly four-fold.

To implement this new legislation, we need effective and experienced leadership at the Mine Safety and Health Administration. Last month, I named, or nominated Richard Stickler of the state of West Virginia to be the head of MSHA. He's got experience. He served for six years as the Director of Pennsylvania's Bureau of Deep Mine Safety. He was a miner, mine shift foreman, a superintendent, and a manager, and the Senate needs to confirm Richard Stickler to this key position.

America's miners work hard every day to support their families and support this country. It's hard work. You deserve the best training, the best equipment and safeguards that we can provide to protect the lives. And this good legislation I'm signing today is an important part of honoring that commitment.

May God bless you all. May God bless our miners and their families, and may God continue to bless our country. And now it's my honor to sign the MINER Act into law. (Applause.)

(The Act is signed.) (Applause.)

END 11:30 A.M. EDT

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