

**WRITTEN STATEMENT OF STEVE ALLRED,
BROTHER OF KERRY ALLRED,
TO THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR
October 3, 2007**

I want to thank Chairman Miller for the opportunity to testify before this Committee. I also want to thank the United Mine Workers Association for its assistance and generous support of our appearance before you.

I have been a union miner since 1978. I was 24 years old when I started at the Wilberg Mine outside of Huntington. I had never been underground before and did not care for it for quite awhile. In fact, I told myself and family that I was working with mining for only a year and then I would move on to other things. But when I was allowed to get into the section work of the mine and to do different jobs and the more I learned and the more I became friends with my co-workers, my attitude began to change. I became addicted. Mining got into my blood.

I became a fireboss and then a miner operator. It was then that I became acquainted with MSHA. I did not like MSHA telling me what I could and could not do and I got frustrated with its oversight. Then, the Wilberg Mine Disaster happened in December of 1984 and it was a drastic changing point in my life as a coal miner.

After the fire at Wilberg, during the recovery work, I learned so much about the safety aspects of mining and the “do’s” and “don’ts.” I realized what an important role MSHA can play in the safety and protection of miners from the experience. I learned to appreciate the expertise of MSHA.

In 1993 PacifiCorp bought the Trail Mountain Mine. I was among the first few men to go rehabilitate the mine. The Trail Mountain Mine was previously a non-unionized operation. As I entered the mine for the first time I was stunned at the difference between this non-union mine and the unionized Wilberg Mine. I was shocked and disappointed with both MSHA and the previous owner at the terrible safety conditions that were permitted to exist without the oversight and protection of the United Mine Workers Association.

At the Crandall Canyon Mine, had the mine operator been responsible, held accountable by the United Mine Workers Association and by MSHA, my brother would not have died. So much of the coal had been mined from the mine that the only thing left was the support that was to hold the mountain up. If the UMWA had been there the pillars and barriers would not have been mined, as the miners who were concerned about the mountain coming down would have had a voice. A unionized mine would have allowed a "safety withdraw" to be called had union miners felt that something was not safe. The miners would have had the UMWA to back them up had the miners felt like someone was going to be hurt or killed.

This lack of responsibility by the companies and lack of oversight by MSHA, coupled with no protection by the UMWA, has led to my family being devastated. Our lives are changed forever. Kerry's wife is having a very hard time and will for some time to come. Her kids and I are trying to be strong for her. That's all we can do. We all know that only God can provide her the comfort she needs from the loss of her husband.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here to testify.