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TUFTS UNIVERSITY
School of Medicine

Department of Family Medicine and Community Health

22 November 2002

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MSHA/OSRV

Honorable Elaine L. Chao, Secretary
United States Department of Labor
Frances Perkins Building
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Secretary Chao:

I have dedicated my life to public health and protecting lives. In 1978, I was invited to come to Washington from my job as Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Health to become the director of NIOSH. One of the first issues I addressed at NIOSH concerned research on the health effects of diesel particulates on workers and miners

Because of the energy crisis and increased oil prices, this had been a very hot issue. Nevertheless the government had just concluded that diesel emissions were so dangerous that health considerations made it unwise to shift production of vehicles heavily toward diesels in order to achieve fuel efficiency and reduce petroleum use. We at NIOSH were studying two groups far more heavily exposed than what was felt to be too dangerous for the general population: underground miners where diesel equipment was in use, and workers in municipal transit garages where diesel vehicles were parked and repaired.

Over twenty years later, no study has suggested that our observations and assessment of hazards were wrong. Thus, the suggestion by your Mine Safety and Health Administration that it needs to revisit the question of diesel particulate emission hazard to learn if miners need to be protected is at best ignorant and at worst a willful attempt to sacrifice miners' lives to increase profits.

In the name of good public health and concern for human life, I urge you to proceed forthwith to enforce the rule promulgated in January 2001.

Sincerely,

Anthony Robbins
Anthony Robbins, MD, MPA
Professor of Public Health

METAL AND MINERAL ADMINISTRATION

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