

BITUMINOUS COAL OPERATORS ASSOCIATION
INDUSTRIAL MINERALS ASSOCIATION – NORTH AMERICA
INTERNATIONAL UNION OF OPERATING ENGINEERS
NATIONAL MINING ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL STONE, SAND AND GRAVEL ASSOCIATION
UNITED MINeworkERS OF AMERICA
UNITED STEELWORKERS OF AMERICA

June 23, 2004

The Honorable Ralph Regula
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education
And Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
2358 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Obey
Ranking Democratic Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education
And Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
1016 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Regula and Ranking Member Obey:

The undersigned representatives of the mining industry and its workers support the mission and programs of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), and we want to express our interest and concern for the mining research program. Since the transfer of the mining research program from the U.S. Bureau of Mines, we have been particularly impressed with the effectiveness and direction of NIOSH's research for improving the health and safety of mineworkers. NIOSH has been very effective in gathering stakeholder input, analyzing the current health and safety problems facing the mining industry, and producing well-conceived and executed research programs that are supported broadly throughout the mining community. Significant advancements have been achieved since the transfer of the research program to NIOSH, but crucial on-going work is now threatened by erosion of basic research funds. We are encouraging further support of the Agency to ensure the viability of the mining research program. In particular we respectfully offer the following urgent needs for your consideration:

1. Ensure that the in-house NIOSH programs are not further diminished from inflation (wage and other uncontrollable increases). NIOSH, in general, and the mining program, in particular, carry out a wide variety of research and development activities important to the health and safety of this Nation's workers. Examples of such efforts in the mining areas include: noise and dust control research, hearing loss and silicosis prevention research, and in mine studies leading to the control of diesel-engine exhaust particulate matter. The research work must be done in accordance with recently enacted Data Quality Guidelines put forth by the Office of Management and Budget. The majority of this work is done in partnership with both organized labor and the mining industry. Unless steps are taken to protect the funding from erosion by inflation, the resources

necessary to do this work will be constantly diminished. To accomplish this goal, an immediate \$4 million increase in the base funding of the NIOSH in-house research programs is needed to offset effects of inflation.

2. Ensure that there is a sufficient extramural research program to complement the in-house mining activities. It is important to augment the focused in-house research efforts at the Mining Labs with a robust program of extramural research at the mining universities in this country. This balance of in-house and extramural research ensures the input of fresh ideas into the mining research efforts. In addition, funding of research at the mining universities helps to ensure that these programs will remain vital and continue to produce the mining engineers so critical to the overall health and safety of the mining industry in the United States. To accomplish this goal, an additional \$1 million to fund competitive contract activity in support of the mining program is needed. The availability of this contract funding will also allow NIOSH to consider and fund needed technological developments best undertaken by the private sector. A recent example of such a need was the Personal Dust Monitor.

3. Provide new funding for emerging issues. As issues develop, the mining program is in need of a modest funding increase so that it can respond with excellence to these issues. The emerging issues facing the mining program next year include:

- mitigating potential mining disasters such as fires, explosions, and mining in proximity to flooded abandoned underground mine workings. As mining activities go deeper, advance at a more rapid rate and encounter more adverse geologic conditions new approaches for alleviating the potential for disasters are urgently needed. The mining practices that have served the industry well over the last twenty years will not, without significant improvements, brought about through research, serve us as well during the next twenty years.

- assessing and improving the emergency response capabilities of the mining industry. Recent experience gained from the Jim Walters mine explosion and the Quecreek mine rescue, point to a critical need to improve capabilities in this area.

To accomplish meaningful results in these emerging areas, a \$5 million increase in the mining program budget of NIOSH is needed.

As Representatives of all sides of the American mining industry, we support the ongoing research programs of NIOSH, and are particularly pleased with the accomplishments and direction of the current mining research program. We believe the NIOSH research program in general, and the mining research program in particular are in urgent need of additional resources to meet the critical issues facing the industry, and we respectfully request your consideration and action on this critical request for **a total increase of \$10 million above the baseline \$42 million budget, specifically for the mining program.**

Sincerely,

Dave Young, President, Bituminous Coal Operators Association

Frank Hanley, General President, International Union of Operating Engineers

Mark Ellis, President, International Minerals Association – North America

Jack Gerard, President & CEO, National Mining Association

Jennifer Joy Wilson, President & CEO, National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association

Cecil Roberts, President, United Mine Workers of America

Leo W. Gerard, International President, United Steelworkers of America