

*Administration of Barack Obama, 2011*

**Statement on the First Anniversary of the Accident at the Upper Big Branch Mine in Montcoal, West Virginia**

*April 5, 2011*

On the 1-year anniversary of the tragedy at the Upper Big Branch Mine, America's thoughts and prayers are never far from the miners who lost their lives and the loved ones they left behind.

During the past year, my administration has worked to investigate the cause of the explosion, bring those responsible to justice, and take the steps necessary to prevent a similar tragedy from occurring again. The Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration launched a thorough investigation into the cause of the explosion and took aggressive steps to combat mine operators who fail to meet their obligations to provide for the safety and health of their miners. The Justice Department's investigation into the mine owner's practices in West Virginia has led, so far, to two criminal indictments.

While these collaborative efforts have changed the way some mine operators do business, we know we can also improve our mine safety laws to better provide for the safety of the men and women who work in America's mines and for their families' peace of mind. That's why the Department of Labor has worked aggressively to institute new measures to help prevent future incidents, including an impact inspection process to target mines with persistent violations. That's why, for the first time in more than 30 years, the Department of Labor successfully argued that a Federal court could temporarily close a mine with severe safety problems. And that's why I continue to support Chairman Harkin and Chairman Kline and their efforts to strengthen America's mine safety laws. Because we owe the men and women who do this important work and the families who love them our best efforts, not just in memory of the 29 miners who lost their lives in last year's tragedy, but to ensure that such a tragedy doesn't happen again.

NOTE: The statement referred to Sen. Thomas R. Harkin, in his capacity as chairman of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions; and Rep. John P. Kline, in his capacity as chairman of the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

*Categories:* Statements by the President : West Virginia, Upper Big Branch Mine accident, first anniversary.

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