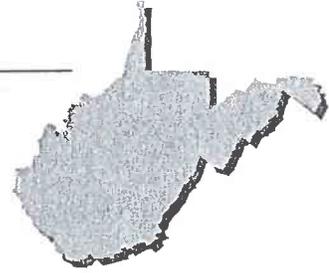


JAY ROCKEFELLER

UNITED STATES SENATOR FOR WEST VIRGINIA



NEWS RELEASE

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SENATOR ROCKEFELLER DELIVERS MESSAGE AT NATIONAL ROLL-OUT OF “END BLACK LUNG CAMPAIGN” IN BEAVER, WV

Washington, D.C. – Senator Rockefeller today delivered the following message at the national Mine Health and Safety Administration’s “End Black Lung Campaign” kick-off event in Beaver, W.Va.:

With health care reform and energy front and center in the US Senate, our coal miners and the coal industry will remain in the spotlight.

At this moment, we have a profound responsibility to support and protect our hard-working miners and their coal jobs.

I have been fighting for our miners for a long time -- for their safety, their health care, their retirement, their jobs -- from the early fights for Black Lung benefits to the crucial Coal Miner Act.

Recently, I have heard so many alarming stories of coal miners whose benefits were routinely delayed -- or denied altogether.

Some cases have taken decades to resolve and this is simply shameful. It is impractical, harmful, and absolutely unacceptable.

So last year, in June, I requested that the Government Accountability Office (the GAO) conduct a comprehensive study of the Black Lung Benefits Program.

When the GAO completed that study just this October, it came with a complete analysis and recommended a number of changes. Like: new requirements for documenting evidence, streamlined paperwork, and strong oversight of the agency’s performance.

This is a step in the right direction. But we are only just getting started. I promise to work with the Department of Labor so we can make sure the GAO's suggested reforms become a reality.

In the process, I plan to introduce legislation making key structural changes to the program so that it can continue working for our miners and our families.

For me, this fight means doing right by our miners -- men and women who have one of the hardest, riskiest and most challenging jobs on the planet.

It's a job that requires strength, dedication and courage -- and it should be met with the best support we can possibly provide.

We all know how hard this disease hits our miners. We all know how much their families hurt, sometimes watching them struggle to do even the most ordinary task.

It's a horrible thing -- and we have to be there for them.

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