

S 2798

Protecting America's Miners Act

Congress: 109 (2005–2007, Ended)

Chamber: Senate

Policy Area: Labor and Employment

Introduced: May 12, 2006

Current Status: Sponsor introductory remarks on measure. (CR S4552)

Latest Action: Sponsor introductory remarks on measure. (CR S4552) (May 15, 2006)

Official Text: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/109th-congress/senate-bill/2798>

Sponsor

Name: Sen. Kennedy, Edward M. [D-MA]

Party: Democratic • **State:** MA • **Chamber:** Senate

Cosponsors (3 total)

Cosponsor	Party / State	Role	Date Joined
Sen. Durbin, Richard J. [D-IL]	D · IL		May 12, 2006
Sen. Murray, Patty [D-WA]	D · WA		May 12, 2006
Sen. Rockefeller, John D., IV [D-WV]	D · WV		May 12, 2006

Committee Activity

Committee	Chamber	Activity	Date
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee	Senate	Referred To	May 12, 2006

Subjects & Policy Tags

Policy Area:

Labor and Employment

Related Bills

Bill	Relationship	Last Action
109 HR 5389	Identical bill	Jul 14, 2006: Referred to the Subcommittee on Workforce Protections.

Protecting America's Miners Act - Expresses the sense of Congress concerning the need for congressional intervention to maintain a highly trained Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) inspector workforce.

Amends the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977 to revise safety standards for mines, including by requiring: (1) atmospheric detection and warning systems; (2) certain communication technologies; (3) emergency underground caches of air and self-contained breathing equipment; (4) self-rescue devices and training; (5) underground refuges; and (6) electronic tracking devices. Deems violations of such standards as the creation of imminent danger to miners.

Requires the Secretary of Labor to establish within the Mine Safety and Health Administration a central communications emergency call center for mine operators. Requires operators to report any emergency or serious mine incident to the center no later than 15 minutes after becoming aware of the incident.

Requires operators to ensure the availability and capabilities of mine rescue teams. Directs the Secretary to promulgate regulations regarding mine rescue teams and accident investigations.

Requires the Secretary to contract with the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board or other independent federal investigative authority to investigate an accident upon the request of the authorized miners' representative or representatives of a majority of the families of the miners killed (or who could have been killed) in such accident.

Requires the MSHA inspector or district manager to notify operators and miners' representatives when a potential pattern of violations is identified. Imposes penalties and miner withdrawal requirements. Revises penalties for safety standards and notification violations.

Establishes, within the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Labor, the position of Miner Ombudsman.

Requires the Secretary to: (1) develop mandatory standards that implement the recommendations of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) concerning flammability of conveyor belts; (2) improve standards concerning seals for abandoned areas in mines; (3) inspect the seals of coal mines that are composed of nontraditional materials to ensure they are constructed in a safe manner; and (4) develop standards requiring a concentration of not more than 1.0 milligram of respirable dust per cubic meter of air.

Abolishes for five years the ceilings on the number of MSHA mine inspector personnel that may be employed. Authorizes MSHA to hire retired inspectors in cases of shortages.

Requires NIOSH to consider new technologies and those that could be adapted for use in facilitating survival of miners during emergencies.

Actions Timeline

- **May 15, 2006:** Sponsor introductory remarks on measure. (CR S4552)
- **May 12, 2006:** Introduced in Senate
- **May 12, 2006:** Read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.