



DOL News Brief

April 15, 2010

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Obama and Solis Pledge to Take Action on Mines



On Thursday, Secretary Solis, Assistant Secretary for the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) Joe Main, Administrator for Coal

Mine Safety and Health Kevin Stricklin, MSHA Deputy Assistant Secretary Dr. Greg Wagner, and Solicitor of Labor Patricia Smith met with President Obama to discuss the recent mine disaster in West Virginia. "The best way that we can honor these men is for the Mine Safety and Health Administration to do its job with the utmost integrity and thoroughness," said Secretary Solis. "As the president has said, the Department of Labor and MSHA will be conducting a systematic and comprehensive investigation into what caused this tragedy. I gave the president my word that this will happen. I am telling the families the same thing." Although details of the catastrophe remain unclear at this time, Solis added that mine explosions are preventable and DOL will look to strengthen enforcement of its existing laws and close loopholes that allow companies to avoid their responsibilities.

Following her meeting with the President, Solis sat down with MSNBC's Tamron Hall and CNN's John King where she reiterated her commitment to miners' safety and talked about the shortcomings of the current law.



The West Virginia Medical Examiner's office has released the names of the [29 miners](#) killed at Upper Big Branch South Mine.

- [Read the Secretary's Statement](#)

We Remember James DeMarce

The Department is saddened by the recent death of Jim DeMarce, who served as the Director of DOL's Office of Workers'

What's Hot

Solis Convenes 1st Ever Latino Worker Health and Safety Summit

On Wednesday, Secretary Solis convened in Houston an historic National Action Summit for Latino Worker Health and Safety co-sponsored by DOL's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), in partnership with the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.



"Workers have a right to talk to their employers about unsafe conditions and, if necessary, to call OSHA," said Solis during her keynote address. At the summit, attended by nearly 1,000 people, OSHA signed an agreement with the Mexican Consulate in Houston and renewed its alliance with the Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center in Morristown, N.J., to promote a better understanding of work-related safety and health for Spanish-speaking workers. These agreements reflect the summit's goal, which is to "provide new, badly needed strategies to prevent thousands of injuries and deaths every year," according to Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA Dr. David Michaels.

- [Read More about the Summit](#)
- [Read the Event News Release](#)
- [Read the Mexico Agreement News Release](#)
- [Read the New Jersey Agreement News Release](#)
- [Read the Secretary's Remarks](#)
- [View the Slideshow](#)

National News

President Obama Delivers an Earth Day Challenge

In honor of the upcoming 40th Anniversary of Earth Day, April 22, President Obama challenged Americans to improve the environment and unveiled an accompanying resource guide to educate the public on how they can help make a difference in their own communities. "As we continue to tackle our environmental challenges, it's clear that change won't come from Washington alone," he said. "In the end, it's people like you – the small business owners and community leaders; the teachers and the students; the young people and the grandparents – who have made Earth Day so successful. And it's going to be up to you to make an even bigger difference over the next 40 years."

- [Watch the President's Message](#)
- [Read the White House News Release](#)
- [Visit the White House Earth Day Site](#)



Compensation Programs Division of Coal Mine Workers' Compensation for more than 25 years.

"For many years, Jim has been the face and soul of the department's black lung benefits program for everyone from union officials and mine workers, to members of the coal industry, to state workers' compensation officials, to congressional staffers and to every Labor Department staff person who contributed to making this program work," said Secretary Solis upon learning of his sudden passing. "All of them relied upon Jim's encyclopedic knowledge of every aspect of the program, his rock-solid judgment and his unflagging support for coal miners facing black lung, a terrible, man-made illness." He will be deeply missed.

- [Read the Secretary's Statement](#)

Oates Testifies on UI Program

On Wednesday, Assistant Secretary for Employment and Training (ETA), Jane Oates testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Finance to discuss the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and how it can help Americans get back to work. "For 75 years, the UI program has been a critical safety net for American workers and an economic stabilizer in times of recession. The UI program has provided a desperately needed lifeline as unemployed workers search for new jobs," she said during her testimony. "It helps workers and their families put food on the table and pay the rent. It is also an important component of economic recovery." The President's Council of Economic Advisors estimates that every \$1.00 spent on unemployment benefits boosts the Gross Domestic Product by \$1.60, and according to the Congressional Budget Office, UI benefits are one of the two most cost effective ways to stimulate job growth.

- [Read Oates' Testimony](#)

Michaels Addresses Healthcare Workers at Medical Conference

Last Week, Assistant Secretary for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) David Michaels presented OSHA's goals, priorities and concerns for worker health and safety during the 2010 conference at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City. Dr. Michaels, an epidemiologist and former research professor at the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health at the George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services, joined other safety

DOL Working for You

EBSA Advisor Enforces COBRA Law for Disabled Employee

When a young Oklahoman man – disabled by a car accident and subsequent stroke – found himself involuntarily terminated from his job and in danger of losing health benefits coverage because of an "administrative error," Miranda Barton swung into action.



The benefits advisor for the Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA) in Dallas, Texas, contacted the employer about its mistake and explained its responsibilities under the Recovery Act amendments to the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, commonly called COBRA. Thanks to Barton's forceful actions, the young man was eventually allowed a government health premium subsidy to help with his medical care.

Barton who goes to law school part-time, hopes to someday become an EBSA investigator and "get even more involved in these cases."

News You Can Use

Funding Opportunities Available

Seven different grant competitions are currently underway at DOL. The Veterans' Employment and Training Service has announced grant competitions for organizations that assist homeless veterans and help veterans develop career pathways to green jobs. The Women's Bureau is planning to award grants to organizations that can assist in the placement and retention of women in nontraditional occupations.

DOL's Employment and Training Administration has funding opportunities as well, consisting of competitions for grants to assist in training for high-growth/high-demand industries, career opportunities in the healthcare sector, and young adult offenders and high school dropouts. National Emergency Grants are also being made available to create on-the-job training experiences that will lead to participants' securing permanent employment.

- [List of Open Grant Opportunities](#)

Around DOL

Secretary Solis Welcomes Regional Representatives in the West

Secretary Solis has appointed two new representatives to manage the Department's regional activities on her behalf. Mark McDermott will serve the states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington and Wyoming. Before joining DOL, he was personnel director for the city of Seattle and is a former member of the Machinists Union and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.



specialists at the 31st Annual Scientific Meeting. The group explored this year's theme, "From Fear to Flu: Novel H1N1, Health Care Workers and Workplace Risks," with the goal of exploring the role of OSHA, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), and unions in reducing the risks of H1N1 exposure faced by healthcare workers.

- [Learn More About H1N1 Safety](#)

100 Days to the ADA

On April 17, 2010, Disability.gov will launch 100 Days to the ADA, a countdown to the 20th Anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Disability.gov will explore one of our nation's most important civil rights achievements, including ramifications of the ADA, historical points leading up to its creation and how supporting individuals with disabilities supports ALL Americans.

The countdown will be available on Disability.gov's Blog, an award-winning federal government Web site that provides comprehensive information about disability-related programs, services, laws and benefits. The site is managed by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), in partnership with 21 other federal agencies.

- [Join the Countdown](#)

Upcoming Deadlines & Events

[Open Grant Opportunities](#)

EBSA — Health Benefits Laws Compliance Assistance Seminar

- [April 21-22, 2010 — Denver, CO](#)

MSHA — Mine Inspector Job Fair

- [April 16-17, 2010 — Plainfield, IN](#)
- [April 29-30, 2010 — Farmington, NM](#)

MSHA — Best Practices for Controlling Respirable Dust in Coal Mining

- [April 21, 2010 — Evansville, IN](#)

MSHA — Stakeholder Meetings on Workplace Combustible Dust Hazards

- [April 21, 2010 — Rosemont, IL](#)

MSHA — North Carolina Mine Safety & Health Seminar

- [April 27, 2010 — Wilson, NC](#)
- [April 28, 2010 — Statesville, NC](#)

OFCCP — Compliance Assistance for Supply and Service Contractors

- [April 16, 2010 — Richmond, VA](#)
- [April 30, 2010 — Richmond, VA](#)

Alicia Villarreal has been named as the secretary's representative for the states of Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada and Utah. Previously, she was a partner at Morgan Lewis and worked in the firm's Los Angeles office's litigation practice. She also served for 14 years as an assistant U.S. attorney in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Central District of California.



- [Read the McDermott News Release](#)
- [Read the Villarreal News Release](#)

WB Chats on Strategic Plan



On Thursday, Sara Manzano-Díaz, Director of Department's Women's Bureau (WB) held a live chat with stakeholders to help shape the DOL Strategic Plan for WB. "This is an important process for our agency, and we need the public's help in shaping our agenda to meet the needs of working women today and in the future," said Manzano-Díaz. Several of the ideas presented during the chat will be used to collaborate with federal, state, and local agencies, nonprofit organizations, service providers and others. The ultimate goal?

Promote policies, provide technical assistance and conduct outreach activities that will prepare women for good jobs, ensure fair compensation, and assure fair and high quality work-life environments.

- [Read the WB Web Chat](#)

DOL in Action

Wage and Hour Levies \$500,000 Fine for Child Labor Violations

Orem, Utah-based Western Wats Center Inc. has paid a \$500,000 penalty following a Wage and Hour Division investigation that revealed the company employed 1,482 minors (ages 13, 14 and 15) in violation of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) child labor rules. FLSA prohibits the employment of individuals under 14 years of age in non-agricultural occupations and limits the number of hours employees age 14 and 15 are allowed to work. Most of the minors were employed as interviewers and worked at the company's phone centers in Arizona, Idaho, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming.

- [Read the News Release](#)

ETA Announces \$50 Million to Assist with Re-employment Activities

The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) has announced \$50 million in grants to 33 states and the District of Columbia to implement re-employment and eligibility assessments for beneficiaries of unemployment insurance. For six states, these will be new grants, while 27 states and the District of Columbia will use their funds to continue their work in this area. The grants allow states to conduct in-person assessments of beneficiaries' needs for training and reemployment services, as well as determining whether the recipients remain eligible for services.

- [Read the News Release](#)

Recovery Highlights

OFCCP — Compliance Assistance Seminar

- [April 20, 2010 — Albany, NY](#)
- [April 23, 2010 — Orange, CA](#)

OFCCP — AAP Development & Preparing for a Desk Audit

- [April 22, 2010 — Baltimore, MD](#)

OFCCP — Webinar - Construction Technical Assistance with ARRA Updates

- [April 22, 2010 — Seattle, WA](#)

OFCCP — EEO Obligations of Companies Receiving ARRA Contracts

- [April 29, 2010 — Baltimore, MD](#)

OLMS — Compliance Assistance Seminar

- [April 22, 2010 — Hato Rey, PR](#)

OSHA — Advisory Committee on Construction Safety and Health Meeting

- [April 16, 2010 — Houston, TX](#)

OSHA — “We Can Help” Safety Fair

- [April 17, 2010 — Houston, TX](#)

OSHA — Maritime Advisory Committee for Occupational Safety and Health Meeting

- [April 29, 2010 — Newport, RI](#)

Follow USDOL on

- DOL certifies Columbia, Tenn., auto workers as eligible to apply for Trade Adjustment Assistance [04/15/2010] <http://bit.ly/aOFL6U> [about 4 hours ago](#)
- DOL certifies Lordstown, Ohio, auto workers as eligible to apply for Trade Adjustment Assistance [04/15/2010] <http://bit.ly/9azRJ1> [about 4 hours ago](#)

Department Announces \$90 Million for On-The-Job Training

The Department announced the availability of up to \$90 million in Recovery Act funding to create on-the-job training experiences. The money will be awarded to states — who with the help of state and local workforce investment boards, community-based organizations and employers — will assist displaced workers acquire job skills and experiences to improve their chances of securing permanent employment. "The nation's economic recovery is taking hold, but there are still those who lack the basic skills and work experience needed to gain, maintain and advance within a job," said Secretary Solis. "States and their partners will use this funding to create on-the-job training experiences, which will improve the employment prospects of dislocated workers in areas that have been hard-hit by the recent economic downturn."

- [Read the News Release](#)

Opportunities are Open: Int'l Affairs

Next week, Secretary Solis and the Department will host a meeting of the G20 Labor and Employment Ministers. It will be the first time in history that Labor Ministers from the world's 20 largest economies have met as the G20! Explore the International Affairs positions below or [view all](#) the exciting and rewarding opportunities at DOL.

1. Positions in Washington DC Metro Area
[Immigration Program Analyst — GS-0301-12/12](#)
DE-10-ETA-043
Close: 05/15/2010
2. Positions in Washington DC Metro Area
[International Economist — GS-0110-12/14](#)
DE-10-HRC-ILAB-035
Close: 04/19/2010
3. Position in Washington DC Metro Area
[Immigration Policy Analyst — GS-0301-14/14](#)
DE-10-ETA-041
Close: 04/22/2010

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