

Statement for the Record
of Ranking Member Robert C. “Bobby” Scott
Protecting Workers and Powering America: The Future of Mining
May 8, 2026 | Field Hearing

Next year will be the fiftieth anniversary of the *Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977* (Mine Act). In the Mine Act, Congress declared that “the first priority and concern of all in the coal or other mining industry must be the health and safety of its most precious resource—the miner.” The *first* priority, not the last.

The Trump Administration has chosen the wrong priorities for mine safety. It should have put miners first by enforcing the Mine Safety and Health Administration’s (MSHA) long overdue silica dust standard, which the Biden Administration published in 2023 and set to go into effect in 2024. Instead, the Trump Administration suspended enforcement, declined to defend the rule in court, and drafted a new rule to replace it. Even though silica dust is killing miners, the Trump Administration chose to put miners last.

By failing to protect miners from silica, the administration is shaping the future of mining as one full of cancer, silicosis, and black lung. Silica dust is twenty times more toxic than other elements of mine dust, and the disabling lung conditions it causes are irreversible and progressive. And the Administration knows that miners are exposed to silica dust at inexcusably high levels. An astonishing new report by the Appalachian Citizens’ Law Center (ACLC) reviewed MSHA dust samples from 2025 and the first quarter of 2026. ACLC found that, of the coal

mines where MSHA took samples in that period, 20 percent had silica dust at dangerous levels that exceed the cap set in the Biden Administration's silica rule. Moreover, 12 mines had more than twice the level of dust permitted by the rule. And this report looked only at coal mines, not the many metal/nonmetal mines spread across the country, where miners are likewise exposed to silica every day.

The Trump Administration has also failed to appropriately prioritize miners in its budget. Specifically, the President's FY27 request proposed to reduce funding for MSHA by \$39.6 million, or 10.2 percent below the FY26 enacted level, and to almost completely dismantle the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the science agency dedicated to worker safety and health research. The Administration's budget request would weaken MSHA's ability to set and enforce standards and provide critical leadership in mine disaster rescue efforts. It would also eliminate NIOSH's critical work researching miner health, incentivizing the private sector's development of safety technology, and providing miners with free lung health scans.

If we continue on the path this Administration has set, the future for miners is one with no cops on the beat, no technological breakthroughs to keep them safe, and no scientists focused on their health.

It does not have to be this way. If this Administration will not put miners first, it is up to Congress to conduct oversight, pass robust budgets, prevent regulatory rollbacks, and set mandates for safety that require mining companies to do the right thing

and put miners' health and wellbeing first. Committee Democrats stand ready to make the promise of the Mine Act a reality.