

Watchdog Groups Call For Criminal Charges Against U.S. Chamber Of Commerce Director Don Blankenship For Homicide  
29 Dead In West Virginia Mine Because Of Chamber Policies

Congress Members Must Order Halt To Contact With Chamber Lobbyists

4/12/2010 Washington, D.C. -- StopTheChamber.com, a coalition of NGOs dedicated to corporate and government accountability, has been warning for months about the devastating effect of U.S. Chamber of Commerce policies on the well being of Americans. Specifically, the Chamber has spent hundreds of millions to fight any regulation of its dues paying members and any regulation of pollution caused by those members. These actions have been led by Chamber CEO Tom Donohue and Massey Energy CEO Don Blankenship, the latter who runs vast coal mining operations in West Virginia, including the serial offending Upper Big Branch mine where 29 miners were killed last week.

"The convergence of the Chamber's policies against regulation of workplace safety and the disaster of mining coal without regard for the environmental impact resulted in the death of 29 hard working West Virginian miners," said attorney and StopTheChamber.com spokesman Kevin Zeese. "This was not an accident, but rather the result of deliberate and intentional decisions and actions of Don Blankenship, a director of the United States Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Blankenship and Chamber CEO Tom Donohue must be held accountable for these deaths. What is it going to take for Congress and the President to stop coddling criminals, masquerading as legitimate businessmen, who cause the death of our loved ones? Blankenship, with the lobbying army of the Chamber to back him up, has thumbed his nose at the Mine Safety and Health Administration, ignoring or appealing every violation, including the scores that resulted in coal mine evacuations and the hundreds of other serious violations. As the Washington Post pointed out in a Saturday editorial, these 29 deaths would not have occurred absent this intentional conduct of Blankenship. He is just as criminally culpable as any mass murderer."

StopTheChamber.com calls for the immediate arrest of Don Blankenship for homicide, and a complete criminal investigation of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and its CEO Tom Donohue to determine what policies and practices led to the death of these miners, whether Chamber lobbyists and lawyers were used to cover-up or avoid compliance with safety regulations, whether Massey Energy, the Chamber and others conspired to create the conditions that caused the deaths, and whether the Chamber is being used to pressure those in various political branches to stop a criminal investigation. Criminal prosecution of the perpetrators of this terrible crime will ensure accountability, expose the Chamber's criminal conduct and pave the way for real worker safety across the nation.

StopTheChamber.com also calls on all Congress Members to immediately issue a standing order to their staff to cease all communication and contact with U.S. Chamber of Commerce lobbyists. The Chamber and its directors have now been directly implicated in the homicide of 29 workers. There can be no more business as usual. Congress Members must stand up for working people by refusing to meet with and do the bidding of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, an organization whose directors, policies and practices have killed and will kill again if they are not stopped.

Source: StopTheChamber