

February 8, 2010

Senator Tom Harkin  
H.E.L.P. Chairman  
731 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

Dear Honorable Senator Harkin,

I am writing you with an urgent request and concern about the direct attack on the future of OSHA's Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) within the Department of Labor's Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2011. This week, Secretary of Labor, Hilda Solis is quoted as stating OSHA will receive an additional \$14 Million over the FY2010 budget, yet proposes to "...*significantly reduce direct federal funding of the agency's Voluntary Protection Program (VPP)*...". This decision by the Agency has no basis in any facts supported by a reduced budget, but is a policy decision that lacks substance. The nearly 1 million workers in VPP are counting on you to return VPP to OSHA's arsenal of tools to protect American workers and promote the best of safety and health in the workplace by adding Appropriations language and line-item funding for the Voluntary Protection Program back into the FY2011 budget.

VPP is the DOL's premier safety and health program, which has been in existence for 26 years, now covering over 900,000 employees and has done more to reduce workplace suffering than all OSHA inspections and citations combined. This is evidenced by the fact that VPP sites have injury and illness rates at least 50% below their industry norms. In recent years, small business worksites have grown from 28% of total VPP sites in 2003 to 39% in 2008, thanks to the mentoring efforts required by current VPP employers and workers that donate their time to grow the OSHA VPP. These efforts keep employees safer and are saving companies and the taxpayer's money. Additionally, when workplaces make the significant commitment to safety required by VPP, it allows OSHA to focus its resources of enforcement where they are most needed.

When the Secretary of Labor states, "*We think the Voluntary Protection Program is making a valuable contribution to workplace safety. These are companies that go above and beyond OSHA requirements and they all have workplace safety and health programs that should serve as a model for the rest of American companies... [but] we spend our scarce resources on companies that disregard workplace safety...*", she ignores one of the most important aspects of VPP, and the cornerstone of its success. VPP requires meaningful worker involvement. VPP requires that hourly personnel have a voice and participation in their safety programs. Through mentoring and sharing best practices in the industry and community, VPP employers and workers become a force-multiplier that expands safety education and improvements far beyond the influence and abilities of a single OSHA compliance officer.

Bottom line - there are no "...*scarce resources...*" in the FY2011 proposed budget for DOL, there is a \$14 Million increase for OSHA; therefore, it has not been "...*very difficult budget choices*" for the Secretary to eliminate funding of VPP, it has been a political policy decision to abandon a self-directed, continuous improvement program that partners and empowers employers and employees into making their workplace safe!

The Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 requires 13 objectives to be accomplished. Only **one** of the 13 objectives is enforcement, **two** are standard setting, and **three** are directly related to the development of cooperation between employer and employee to establish a safe work place – exactly what the founders of OSHA VPP established the program to accomplish. There is no OSHA 'roots in enforcement' only an Agency ignoring 12 other mandates from Congress.

Please, provide me your feedback that you will support Appropriations Language for VPP and stand behind American companies and workers that look to cooperate with government to prevent workplace injuries and implement effective safety and health programs under the high standards of VPP. The nearly 1 million workers striving to get all of America's workplaces up to VPP standards and attain performance levels that "...*go above and beyond OSHA requirements...*" will thank you.

Respectfully,

David L. Jackson, Director  
Site Safety Standards  
Mission Support Alliance, Inc.  
Richland, Washington 99352  
[Djack1086@aol.com](mailto:Djack1086@aol.com)  
(509) 438-4188