

HB

311

BEFORE THE SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
Robin Taylor, Chair

Testimony by Wendy Natkong, Medical Coordinator, Kennecott Greens Creek Mining Company, Regarding the Need to Amend Alaska Statute 23.10.410 to Increase the Number of Hours a Person May Work in an Underground Mine to 10 Hours at the Face.

Chairman Taylor and Committee members, my name is Wendy Natkong. I am the Medical Coordinator and Emergency Medical Service Director at Kennecott Greens Creek Mining Company on Admiralty Island. I have held this position since May 1995, but was employed by a contractor to provide medical services at Greens Creek until the shutdown in 1993. My husband has been a Kennecott employee for four years and currently works as an underground miner at Greens Creek.

I recently addressed the 10-hours at the face issue by way of a letter to the editor of the Juneau Empire, which was endorsed with thirty-four signatures from Greens Creek Mine underground workers. Attached is a copy of that letter as well as a petition signed by 128 of the 150 people now employed at the mine. I am here today to speak for myself and also on their behalf.

It is my belief that the original intent of restricting underground working hours was for the safety and welfare of miners. In 1913 when that legislation was introduced, there was most certainly a need for it. However, we are now approaching the turn of another century and this restriction is clearly an antiquated mandate. The pick axe days are long gone. A miner who worked in 1913 would find that the only part of a mining operation that has remained constant is the rock itself.

With the new technology in mining operations it is my own opinion that restricting the hours worked at the face may, ironically, have a reverse effect on the safety aspects of underground work. For instance, a miner uses a Power Class twin

boom drill to bore the holes for explosives. A crew loads those holes with a non-volatile emulsion-type explosive. The face is blasted, wet down, scraped and the ore is then mucked out by an operator in a state-of-the-art loader to enclosed cab haul trucks. This cycle that probably took 3-4 days in 1913, with a full crew, can now be done in well-lit, ventilated areas in less than a shift. I personally feel that workers underground would prefer a little extra time to get more done. When they feel rushed to finish a round before the end of a shift, accidents happen. This is why I believe that it is safer to work a little longer at the face. When one considers that currently at Greens Creek, time at the face is about six hours, miners feel that they just begin an assignment and the shift is suddenly over. Remember that a drill that costs over \$400,000 is much safer, more efficient, and easier to operate than a hammer and steel or a pick axe.

My goal at Greens Creek is to not have to work. I am a Paramedic and I would rather not display my skills and knowledge, except in the classroom or in training scenarios. I have a vested interest in the safety and well-being of our employees since I know them all and care very much for them.

A lot of my time is spent underground. There are first aid stations that require my attention regularly. It is important for me to know where everything is and what everyone does underground. One discovery I have made is that time passes by very rapidly when I am working inside the mine. I usually have to quit much sooner than I would like so that I may shower and change. I would welcome a ten-hour day and more time off.

When I am underground, I get dirty. But it is not the scary, damp and dreary place that some have suggested. There are desks, filing cabinets, and coffee pots there, too. Presently, the ambulance is stored there to keep it warm, dry and quickly

available. (Although, since my return in May, we have only used it twice, both times for contractors.) The mining equipment that I have described earlier is equipped with fire suppression and lighting systems that completely illuminate the face. Many areas are lit with regular fluorescent lights.

Greens Creek employees have long had an excellent safety record. I could not work there if safety were not supported completely. If I felt that the underground mine was an unsafe place, I would not go in there every chance I can. I would fear for my husband's safety if I believed it to be any less safe than other forms of industry. I would definitely not be here today if I did not fully believe that changing the limit on 'hours worked at the face' was a safe and positive move that will greatly benefit our employees and Alaska mining in general.

As a Kennecott Greens Creek employee, a veteran Paramedic, and as a wife, I ask the Committee to support the House passed HB 311, which changes the 8-hours rule to allow 10 hours by statute at the mining face.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kennecott Greens Creek Mining Company
 P.O. Box 32199
 Juneau, AK 99803
 (907) 789-8100
 FAX (907) 789-8117



We the undersigned, employees of Kennecott Greens Creek Mining Company, urge the Legislature to pass legislation changing current law to allow a full 10 hours of work at the raining face. The effect of the change will be to allow us the opportunity to spend more time with our families and will give all Greens Creek employees greater economic security through increased operating efficiency.

The Greens Creek underground operation is well within compliance of the Mine Safety and Health Administration's (MSHA) regulations. Greens Creek is a safe operation and maintains an effective, employee oriented safety program. The extensions to 10 hours at the mining face will not compromise safety, as demonstrated in other states which already authorize 10 hours or longer. A number of us have worked extended hours at other operations without compromising occupational health and safety.

Passage of this legislation now will encourage the hiring of more qualified Alaskans to fill the remaining jobs available at Greens Creek before mine start-up in summer, 1996.

Sincerely,

Name	Job Title
<i>J. B. [Signature]</i>	ADMINISTRATOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT
<i>R. M. [Signature]</i>	Senior Analyst
<i>[Signature]</i>	PROJECT ENGINEER
<i>[Signature]</i>	Miner U.G.
<i>[Signature]</i>	MECHANIC SUP
<i>[Signature]</i>	MECHANICAL SUPERVISOR

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Sincerely,

Name	Job Title
Bob Spross	MEAT DEPT.
Haynes Torrey	Mill Maint Dept
Paul Nelson	Mill Maint Elect.
Ronald J. Callahan	Mill maintenance Dept.
Gilles McNamee	Mill Maint Dept
Leonard Skunkie	Mill maint. Dept.
JOHN MILLER	MILL MAINTAINANCE
Mike Boyson	Mill Maint.
Ace McLaughlin	Mill Maint
KEN Lihlbid	TECH 4 MILL MECHANIC
Brend Harlock	mill ops
JOHN HANSEN	WATER ops

M

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Sincerely,

Name	Job Title
Paul Davidson	Geologist
Tim Hall	Chief Geologist
Kerry Lear	Geologist
Brett Allen	Underground Geologist
Steve Newkirk	Senior Geologist
Lionel D Wood	Sr Planning Engineer
Ken Prince	HR Mgr
Lynn [unclear]	Assoc HR Rep
Madel Vander	Accountant
Kenneth [unclear]	Sr. Est. Engineer

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Sincerely,

Name	Job Title
Gordon F.W. Canning "Bronx"	Underground Mine Foreman
Bill Johnson	Mine Clerk
Michael Smith	Materials Control Supervisor
Gloria Jaye Hill	Purchasing
Eric Holt	ASSOCIATE BUYER
Tom Miller	miner
Paul Schue	Associate Buyer
[REDACTED]	
Y. A. Nelson	Materials Clerk
[REDACTED]	MATERIALS CLERK

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Sincerely,

Name	Job Title
William F. Oelklaus	Environmental Supervisor
[Signature]	Environmental Tech
Stephen L. Martin	Environmental Technician
Mary Kirtley	Account Payable
Peter D. [Signature]	Environmental Engineer
[Signature]	Product Supervisor
R.W. [Signature]	Controller
[Signature]	Payroll Accountant
[Signature]	Information Specialist
[Signature]	Crew Manager

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Sincerely,

Name	Job Title
Albert A. Morrison	Sr Health & Safety Technician
R. J. [unclear] (G. M. [unclear])	Health & Safety Supervisor

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Sincerely,

Name	Job Title
Charles Churchill	mechanic
Marty Coomb	miner
Darin Coomb	miner
A.C. Fredley	miner
Rick L...	miner
C. P...	mine electrician
John E. ...	C/G miner
Dyke W. Wainwright	miner
Tom ...	Mechanic
John ...	miner
C.A. ...	SUPERVISOR

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Sincerely,

Name	Job Title
Daniella Nelson	Sr. Business Analyst
Robert J. Hibs	Building Maintenance
Nipha Phillips	TIESMAN
Clay Walker	Sr. Engine Tech
Wm J. Russell	Cubit (Tiesman)
Robert W. Bennett	U.G. Miner
Hobby Z. Burn	Environmental Tech.
Mae Spokore	SHUTTLE VAN "DRIVER"
Karl W. Weede	U.G. ENGINEER
Alan Skunway	Miner
A. E. Smith	Miner
D. [Signature]	Contractor (CONTRACTOR)

Name	Job Title
Robin K. Jackson	Pump Man (Underground)
Charles H. Mitchell	Shift Boss
Jim [unclear]	[unclear]
Jim "White" [unclear]	Miner
Clayton E. [unclear]	SURFACE WELDER
[unclear]	Underground Mechanic
Ken McLaughlin	Underground Miner
[unclear]	UG Electrician
Hugh [unclear]	UG Electrician
[unclear]	Surface Operator
[unclear]	Surface Operator
John Oldaker	Underground MINER
M. [unclear]	Core Driller
John O. Morris	Underground Miner
[unclear] core driller	Core Driller
[unclear]	Underground Miner
James DePomeroy	Geo TECH
William [unclear]	MINER
[unclear]	UG Mech.
[unclear]	UG Mech.
[unclear]	UG Mech.
[unclear]	Miner
Robt. [unclear]	UG MINER
[unclear]	UG Mechanic
[unclear]	Essential Centers
[unclear]	Medical COORDINATOR
[unclear]	Mechanic (Underground)
[unclear]	UG Mechanic/Welder

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Sincerely,

Name	Job Title
John R. Wick	Underminer
Darryl E. Jones	Mechanic
Teddy J. Smith	OPERATOR
Kerry B. Beld	operator
Steve Hesse	OPERATOR
Steve Danner	operator
Mike Pinner	operator
Kenneth Hubbard	FACILITY
M. Warr	Powerhouse
Dorcia Mervise	EMT III
Lloyd Williams	Inspector
Frank Soren	Building Maint.

Name	Job Title
Mark Petrus	Boilerhouse Mains
Paul Smith	P. Ser.
William	Operator
Edward Leighton	Inventor
New R. Smith	Boiler Maint.
Brie Mygatt	Elec. Engineer
Vern Carey	Mill Maint
Bob Ridler	Electrician
Gordon Hill	E/EC, TECH
William	Elec. Sup.
Bryan Hubert	Millwright
Bill Schodding	Chief Metallurgist
Bob J	Administration

Wendy J. Natkong
3805 McGinnis Drive
Juneau, Alaska 99801
(907)789-8116

March 21, 1996

Juneau Empire
3100 Channel Drive
Juneau, Alaska

Dear Editor:

Mining personnel around the state are awaiting the decision of the legislature as to the reversal of the eight-hour work day for miners. As this issue is debated, it is important to remember that the mining industry has definitely moved into the nineties in terms of quality and technology.

At Greens Creek Mine on Admiralty Island, the workforce has been told repeatedly by our general manager that safety issues come first. We have a safe mine. We intend to maintain our high standard for safety. Changing our work schedule will not affect our safety issues and there are statistics that confirm that. The underground work area is certainly not a noisy, vibrating damp place where water and rocks fall constantly. Work areas are well lit, ground control is our highest priority, and the ventilation system is extremely efficient in removing dust and exhaust. We employ engineers of the highest calibre who design these systems for the comfort and safety of the workers.

This has been a year of great transition as we added over 100 employees and many contractors in preparation for the re-opening of our mine. Yet, Greens Creek Mining Company employees have operated for nearly a year without a single lost time accident. In Alaska, the fishing and logging industries are considered to be more dangerous than mining, yet there are no restrictions limiting the daily work schedules of those industries. Once an employee arrives at the mine site, time is required for changing clothes, safety meetings and shift change information. Then more time is needed to go underground to be taken to an assigned piece of equipment and then to the work area. Miners must leave their work area in time to go outside, shower and change clothes again. The actual time spent in the underground work area is much less than eight hours. Adding a couple of hours to the work day does not present a safety hazard to these workers. Often a worker gets started on an assignment just to have the shift ending before it can be completed.

There is a boat and bus commute to Greens Creek Mine that adds nearly three hours to the day. A twelve-hour day does not leave much time for home and family. The end point desired in extending our shifts is that we would have more days off to spend with our families and fewer commutes per week. In a time when family value issues are constantly discussed, it seems that a plan to allow workers optimal quality time at home would be a positive move.

Reversing the 'eight hour work day for miners' law does not mandate that miners must work ten hours, it only opens the door for freedom of choice in the workforce. At Greens Creek Mine our organizational structure is flatter than other companies. Employees are encouraged to voice opinions and communicate and interact at all levels. Underground miners have been told that they would design a schedule based on their own choice. Management will not dictate any change in the schedule; workers will discuss options and present proposals. It is even possible that the employees may decide not to change our current schedule. However we do believe that we should be empowered legislatively to make that decision ourselves. Changing this law gives us that choice.

We are proud to work at Greens Creek. It is a beautiful property with strict environmental controls, state-of-the art equipment and a clean, safe underground operation. The company offers good wages and benefits which boosts the local economy. We are only asking for the right to have alternatives in our schedule.

Yours truly,

Wendy J. Natkong

Wendy J. Natkong
Medical Coordinator
Greens Creek Mining Company

Tim Hall - Chief Geologist

Dan Cannon U.G. Miner

Roger HEALTH & SAFETY SUPERVISOR
Jerry Burtell U.G. Miner

John Miller M. Walter

John J. Oliver
Phil L. U.G. Miner

Craig Bussell CONSTRUCTION SUPERINTENDENT

Clayton Wilder

Ken McNaughton Underground Miner

Sherry

Charles F. Christ Underground mechanic

Clayton Edens SURF OPS
Kris SURFACE OPS

Robert W. Bennett U.G. Miner

John Odeh U.G. MINER
Mate diamond driller

Paul Nelson
Col ops.

Joseph Zuber MINE ENGINEER

Cecilia McQuinn EMS Division

Robin K. Jackson U.G. Miner

Alan Sorensen U.G. MINER

Chris J. Wilson CONVEYOR DRILL FOREMAN

Walter SURF TECH.

Jim MINER
Mike MINER
Mike SURF OPS



Council of Alaska Producers

PO. Box 22653 Juneau, Alaska 99802

April 10, 1995

Senator Robin Taylor
Chairman
Senate Judiciary Committee
Capitol Building, Room 30
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Dear Senator Taylor:

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Council of Alaska Producers in support of HB 311. The Council is an Alaska non-profit corporation whose members include most of the major mining companies currently exploring, developing and operating in Alaska.

We strongly support the concept of more flexible work hour arrangements for underground mining operations. This should lead to improved safety, morale and productivity in many cases. Remote camp operations (where there is no daily commute) should particularly benefit by this legislation due to the long periods an employee would be idled with an 8 hour shift. This already has happened in Northern Canada with remote, fly-in, underground mines that have gone to longer shifts under laws similar to that proposed here.

The Alaska minerals industry is in competition with a global market for mineral exploration and development dollars. We must do everything we can to meet this challenge if we want to continue development of our vast mineral resource potential.

We are not asking you to set a precedent or blaze any new trails here. SB 311 simply falls into line with many other states by recognizing that times have changed. It offers a reasonable approach to the issue that will benefit employee and employer alike, allows our state to compete on a more level playing field and sends a positive message to industry that Alaska is open for business.

Yours truly,


David Stone
President



ALASKA MINERS ASSOCIATION, INC.

501 W. Northern Lights Blvd., Suite 203, Anchorage, Alaska 99503 FAX: (907) 278-7997 Telephone: (907) 278-0347

April 9, 1996

Honorable Robin Taylor
Chairman, Senate Judiciary
Alaska State Senate
Capitol Building
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: CS for House Bill 311(JUD), Time At the Face in Underground Mines

Dear Senator Taylor,

The Alaska Miners Association wishes to go on record strongly supporting CSHB-311(JUD). This bill makes important changes regarding the amount of time that an employee can work at-the-face in an underground mine.

The change from the currently allowed 8 hours to 10 hours is extremely important for the viability of many projects in the State, especially in remote areas. The bill also includes an innovative approach whereby, if a company wishes to work a schedule of more than 10 hours, they can do so only if they can convince the Commissioner of Labor and get his approval.

This bill is important for underground mining anywhere in the State but especially in Southeast Alaska. Because of the rugged terrain it is very likely that most mines in Southeast will be underground. This bill will allow companies evaluating these projects to plan for 10 hour shifts during their feasibility studies, thereby increasing the odds that more projects will be economic. This will of course mean new jobs and diversified economic development for this area of the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this bill.

Sincerely,

Steven C. Borell, P.E.
Executive Director

cc: Representative Al Vezey

FISCAL NOTE

N. 2

Bill Version: CSHB 311(L&C)

(H) Publish Date: 3/8/96

STATE OF ALASKA
1996 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Revision Date: _____
Title: An Act repealing limitation on hours
may be employed in a mine
Sponsor: Representative Vezey
Requestor: House Labor and Commerce

Department Affected: Labor
BRU: Labor Standards & Safety
Component: Occupational Safety
and Health
COMPONENT SERIAL NO. 970

EXPENDITURES/REVENUES: (Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 00	FY 01	FY 02
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

CAPITAL						
----------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

CHANGE IN REVENUE FUND SOURCE #						
--	--	--	--	--	--	--

FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/Program Receipt						
1006 GF-MHTIA						
Other						
TOTAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

POSITIONS:

FULL-TIME						
PART-TIME						
TEMPORARY						

Estimate of current year (FY96) impact: \$ 0.0

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

HB 311 would repeal the limitation on the hours a person may be employed in a mine. Current law allows a person to perform work not more than 8 hours within any 24 hour period under ground.

Prepared by: Al Dwyer, Director Phone: 269-4914
Division: Labor Standards and Safety Division Date: 1/23/96
Approved by Commissioner: Tom Cashen, Commissioner
Agency: Department of Labor Date: 1/23/96

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COMMITTEE COPY FISCAL NOTE

FISCAL NOTE

No. 1

STATE OF ALASKA
1996 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Bill Version: CSHB 311(L&C)

(H) Publish Date: 3/8/96

Revision Date: Original Dept Affected Natural Resources
 Title: An Act repealing the limitation on the hours BRU: Resource Development
a person may be employed in a mine; and making a ... Component: Mining Development
 Sponsor: Representative(s) Vezey, Toohy, Martin
 Requestor: _____ Component Serial No. 442

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY97	FY98	FY99	FY00	FY01	FY02
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
CAPITAL EXPENDITURES	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
CHANGE IN REVENUES ()	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1006 GF/MHTIA						
Other						
TOTAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimate of any current year (FY96) cost: \$ none

POSITIONS

FULL-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
PART-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
TEMPORARY	0	0	0	0	0	0

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

There is no anticipated fiscal impact associated with implementation of this legislation.

Prepared by: Jules Ineson, Director Phone: 269-6625
 Division: Mining & Water Date: 31-Jan-96
 Approved by Commissioner: [Signature] Date: 31-Jan-96

COMMITTEE COPY

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