

Joe Manchin III
WEST VIRGINIA



United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC

November 15, 2020

Dear United Mine Workers of America,

Fifty-two years ago, West Virginia suffered an immeasurable loss when 78 brave coal miners were killed in the Consolidation Coal Company's No. 9 Mine Tragedy in Farmington. Every year, this anniversary reminds us to count our blessings, remember those we have lost, and recognize the sacrifice so many West Virginians have made to mine the coal that forged the steel that built the guns and ships that made America the superpower we are today. While we may not be together this year to honor those who were lost on this tragic day, we can each remember them in our own ways.

My dear uncle John Gouzd, one of my neighbors, and several high school classmates were in the mine that day. For days, we all sat around the company store waiting for updates about the fate of our loved ones. I will never forget the look on my mother's face when she heard the news that her younger brother had died in the explosion. We all lost someone that day. Everyone I had ever known came together to comfort one another during those terrible days and the years after. Our community and the entire state came together to mourn the lives we lost during that terrible explosion.

Now, over half a century later, we continue to grieve and honor those we lost as we pray for their loved ones who still feel this loss every day. I firmly believe that even one life lost while on the job is one too many. Our miners should feel safe at work, knowing they'll return to their families once the shift ends. Because of the personal impact of this disaster, I knew that when I became Governor I could make changes that would help keep our miners safe. I have been dedicated to improving safety conditions for our miners so we never have to experience this again and ensuring that all of our miners and their families are taken care of for their hard work powering America. Let us all take this time to remember those 78 West Virginians we lost, and honor their sacrifice for this nation.

With warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joe Manchin III".

U.S. Senator Joe Manchin III
UMWA Honorary Member