# Congressional Hearing on MSHA Oversight

Insights
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Some mining industry professionals would say that this hearing is long overdue, but let's all focus on the old adage, better late than never. On Friday, June 21, U.S. House of Representatives Member Mark Meadows (NC) is hosting a field hearing in Mitchell County, North Carolina entitled "Building a Better Partnership: Exploring the Mine Safety and Health Administration's Regulaiton of Southern Appalachian Mining." This important field hearing is being conducted through the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform's Subcommittee on Government Operations.

Representative Meadows, along with Subcommittee Chairman John Mica (FL), Representative Morgan Griffith (VA), and Representative Phil Roe (TN), have invited industry representatives (including current NCAA President Sam Bratton) and high-level MSHA officials to testify regarding the relationship between MSHA and the mining industry in our region. The field hearing will provide a much-needed opportunity for the mining industry to discuss big picture issues with how MSHA operates in the Southeastern M/NM District. Although testimony is not finalized, I expect that some of the issues will include MSHA's planned de-funding of the state grants program and transfer of $5 million from the training budget to enforcement, a lack of consistency in enforcement within (and outside) the Southesatern District, and "new interpretations" of regulations that have frustrated many in the mining community (e.g., guarding regulations, training enforcement, etc.).

With the title "Building a Better Partnership" we can hope that coming out of this field hearing MSHA may carefully evaluate its current relationship with the mining industry and work toward improving mine safety and health in a cooperative, rather than adversarial manner. The top priority for any mining industry professional I meet is providing a safe work environment for all miners - perhaps this field hearing can take us one step forward in working together to meet this goal.

The field hearing is being held at 9:30 AM at the Historic Mitchell County Courthouse, 11 North Mitchell Avenue, Bakersville, NC 28705. There is only room for around 150 people in the courthouse, so if you plan to attend you should arrive by 8 or 8:30 am to get a seat.

For those of you who cannot attend the hearing live, stay tuned for an update on the testimony with my commentary in the weeks following the hearing.

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