Remembering Scotia

An historical marker was placed beside U.S. 119 at Oven Fork, KY., Tuesday to honor the 26 miners and federal inspectors who died in two coal mine explosions on March 9 and March 11, 1976.

The methane blasts rocked the Scotia Mine in eastern Kentucky and, 34 years later, widows of the fallen men, representatives from the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), members of the mining community and local politicians gathered to honor the fallen miners at the site of the new highway marker. “We are not resigned to the deaths of miners,” Dr. Gregory Wagner, MSHA deputy assistant secretary, said during the ceremony. “We will continue to fight, and we will continue to work to eliminate the causes of injuries, illnesses and fatal accidents in mining. We look forward to the day that we celebrate a time when no miners die in this nation.”

What’s Hot

Pension Asset Restitution

The U.S. Labor Department has obtained consent judgments providing for restitution of more than $12 million by plan officials and service providers involved with the employee stock ownership plan sponsored by The Employee Ownership Holding Co. of Stockton, Calif., and Fife, Wash. The judgments also provide for release of a fund currently holding more than $11 million. “These settlements send a clear message that the Labor Department will not tolerate the blatant misuse of pension assets at the expense of workers and their families,” said Secretary Solis.

$2 Billion for Training and Youth

On Wednesday, Secretary Solis testified before the Appropriations Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives. She presented the department’s fiscal year 2011 budget and fielded questions from Chairman David Obey and the rest of the Congressional panel—covering the full range of DOL programs and initiatives. At the hearing, Solis also announced the Obama Administration’s support for $2 billion in additional funds for training and youth employment. “Workers and their families are hurting in these tough economic times,” said the Secretary. “We want to ensure that investments prompting job creation will continue until the labor market fully recovers from the economic downturn.”

Department Provides More Than $2.7 Million for Louisiana Recovery

A $2,769,323 DOL National Emergency Grant will help continue clean-up and recovery efforts in the wake of damage caused by Hurricane Gustav in Louisiana in 2008. Funds will be used to create more temporary jobs to assist in the recovery efforts as a result of the devastation. In addition, the funds will provide workforce development services for many of the participants to assist them in obtaining permanent employment.

News You Can Use

Comment Period on Change to Injury/Illness Data Extended

OSHA is extending the comment period on the proposal to revise its Occupational Injury and Illness Recording and Reporting regulation to March 30 because of weather-related federal government closures in February, and to correct the comment period stated in the proposed rule. The proposal focuses on restoring a column on the OSHA Form 300 to better identify work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). The rule does not change existing requirements for when and under what circumstances employers must record MSDs.

Screening and Surveillance: A Guide to OSHA Standards

OSHA has updated the “Screening and Surveillance: A Guide to OSHA..."
International Women's Day

In celebration of International Women's Day, Secretary Solis addressed nearly 300 attendees at an event hosted by the UN Information Center Washington, the UN Foundation and the Women's Foreign Policy Group. "As a product of the women's movement, the social justice movement and the civil rights movement, I have seen how far we have come in advancing the role of women in our country and around the globe," said Solis. "I also see how much further we have yet to go in supporting women and girls to ensure equality and opportunity in our workplaces, our schools and in our communities as a whole." The event was one of many held around the world that called for greater support to women, particularly in developing countries.

View the Slideshow
Read the Secretary's Remarks

Innovative Workforce Solutions

On Wednesday, Assistant Secretary for Employment and Training Administration Jane Oates traveled to Philadelphia to meet with a myriad of local organizations, including Jobs For the Future, the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board, District 1199C Training and Upgrading Fund, the Job Opportunity Investment Network, and the Philadelphia Mayor's Commission on Literacy. She toured a union training facility which prepares both members and non-members for careers in healthcare. Oates moved on to the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania where she addressed more than 100 business leaders and joined in a panel on local job creation efforts. The event coincided with Philadelphia’s Workforce Solutions Week, which brings together workers, employers, public officials, and educators to examine innovative approaches to national workforce development.

Looking Back and Moving Forward

On Wednesday, Secretary Solis hosted her first town hall meeting at the Department. Before a standing room only crowd of employees and departmental officials, she outlined DOL’s accomplishments, noting that even her boss, President Obama, gives a year-end review. She solicited “good ideas” to ensure that the Department is doing everything it can to assist working families during these challenging times. The Secretary also took a moment to highlight the work of several individuals who have gone above the call of duty — including braving the recent blizzard!

DOL Working For You

Dollars and Cents Add Up for Woman’s Bureau Wi$eup Entrepreneur

Esther Fernandez of Massachusetts has not only gained control over her finances, but also started a real estate investment company. She credits her success to the knowledge and savvy gained from the Wi$eUp financial education program funded by the Women’s Bureau.

Fernandez, a divorced mother of two, took courses in financial planning, investing, and entrepreneurship which she said gave her renewed confidence in her abilities and helped her set and reach goals of financial independence and starting a business. She also offers advice to help distressed homeowners who face financial problems with their lenders.

"Before I was fearful about financial challenges I faced,” Fernandez said, “but the Wi$eUp program motivated me, gave me confidence, and allows me to help others.”

Recovery Highlights: Emergency Grants