

98-08: S 1237 Enzi Bill Support

Information

Action

INFORMATION

The House of Representatives on March 17 approved two bills, H.R. 2864 (OSHA Compliance Assistance Act) and H.R. 2877 (Prohibit enforcement quotas), by voice vote. Senator Enzi may well seek to add his bill (S.1237) to one of these minor house bills. Now that the focus shifts to the Senate, it is important that you contact your senators and representatives quickly in support of both Senator Enzi's Bill and Congressman Talent's companion bill. PMA has sent the following letter of support to all the Senators and Congressmen in California, Oregon and Washington:

I am writing to seek your strong support for Senator Enzi's: S. 1237 or Congressman Talent's OSHA reform legislation, H.R. 2579. Pacific Maritime Association represents 87 marine shippers and terminal operators and has a long history of involvement with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Department of Labor, and we believe that these proposed amendments to the OSH Act will significantly improve our ability to offer our employees a safe workplace.

In addition to all of the applicable OSHA general industry safety and health standards, the shore based maritime industry is subject to two vertical standards, §1917 marine terminal standard and the §1918 longshoring standard. (The original longshoring standard actually predates passage of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970.) Both of these standards were substantially revised in 1997, and Pacific Maritime Association and the industry worked with OSHA at all stages of development in an effort to produce workable standards that would reinforce our efforts to make marine terminal operations as safe as possible.

Pacific Maritime Association and the individual employers which comprise the membership allocate significant resources and energy to attain full compliance with OSHA's standards. Amendments to the Occupational Safety and Health Act, as found in this bill, would allow industry the additional flexibility and immediate benefit of hiring third party safety auditors. These auditors would be able to candidly discuss weaknesses and formulate productive plans without fear of incurring penalties. This will result in more safety professionals spending time on marine terminals and an increased emphasis on safe work practices. Several of our member companies have tried this approach over the last several years on a voluntary basis and have reduced their accident rates significantly. In fact, the 1997 overall accident rate for our member companies has fallen six years in a row, and it is now at 9.4. This rate is lower than both Water Transportation, and the Trucking and Warehousing industry.

The provisions for drug and alcohol testing as well as personal accountability for the use of personal protective equipment will also provide a strong individual incentive toward safety on the job. Allowance for the "third party audit," the shift from a regulatory to a cooperative OSHA posture, and elimination of inspector "quotas" and penalties for non serious paper work violations outlined in this legislation is good for industry, as well as OSHA. We ask for your enthusiastic support on this measure when it comes up for a vote.

ACTION

Employers are requested to note and support these bills. Sample merge mail letter(s) and senate and congressional addresses are available electronically upon request (address at bottom of this page) (Thanks to Capt John Mc Neill at MTC for developing the mail merge list.)

The bill itself can be located on the internet at <http://thomas.loc.gov/>. Search for S. 1237.