

Comment from Jill Armentrout, [lungsatwork.org](http://lungsatwork.org)

As a professional who works exclusively with coal miners who are at risk for black lung disease, I find it appalling that this amendment is even necessary. One would hope that anyone who possessed information that could impact the health and well-being of another person would be anxious to share that information because it is the ethical thing to do. That being said, this amendment will at least insure that the miners have access to all the information that is pertinent to their pulmonary health, and that is a positive step. The miners we treat are often at a significant disadvantage when trying to navigate through the maze of federal black lung benefits-the process is tedious and often confusing, the miners don't often have legal representation, and they are often so ill that even the act of attending appointments or hearings is difficult for them. Even when the miners win their cases, the responsible operators often refuse to pay and will keep the case in litigation for years while the miners get sicker and eventually die, leaving their grieving widows to try to continue the claims process. Forcing the responsible operators to be liable for payment of claims even as they are appealing the cases may at least provide some financial relief for the families who are dealing with the illness of a loved one, and anything that simplifies the claims process for the miners would be a welcome improvement.