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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1701

September 30, 2011

The Honorable Hilda Solis
Secretary of Labor
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20210

Dear Secretary Solis:

I am writing to express concern regarding the training manuals used for the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program (EEOICPA).

As has been widely reported in the media, the federal EEOICPA training manual gives claimants fictional names from movies and television shows. One such example is a claimant nicknamed "Freddie Krueger", who reportedly suffered from "depression, dementia and skin cancer" and passed away on October 31st. Other examples include a claimant nicknamed "Jack Bauer" after the television show '24' and a pathologist nicknamed "Hannibal Lecter" after the horror movie, "Silence of the Lambs".

To be frank, this is offensive. Kentucky's First Congressional District is home to the Department of Energy's Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant, a key provider to our national defense in past years. Unfortunately, the plant carries a legacy of employees exposed to dangerous and even deadly materials, and as a result I have numerous constituents who have been required to use the EEOICPA program. I know firsthand that all too often workers and surviving family members run into unnecessary obstacles when weaving through a maze of government red tape to claim the benefits they deserve. These claimants deserve for the Department of Labor to be responsive and sympathetic to their needs, and not making a mockery of their health.

It is my understanding that the Department of Labor has decided to end the use of this offensive manual. But this is just one example of why I believe Congress must work to bring greater oversight, transparency and accountability to the EEOICPA program. I call to your attention legislation I have introduced, H.R. 1030, the EEOICPA Amendment Act, which would require the President to establish and appoint an advisory board for the 'Part E' portion of the EEOICPA program. Additionally, the Ombudsman for the Department of Labor would be required to provide an annual report to Congress on the program and make the report available online.

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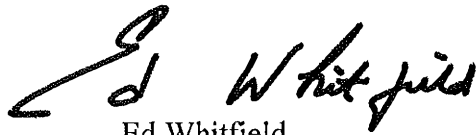
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It would be a positive step for our nation's Cold War nuclear workers to see the Department's support for this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ed Whitfield". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "E".

Ed Whitfield
Member of Congress

EW:cf