



Leo W. Gerard
International President

November 12, 2013

VIA FAX

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 1.2 million active and retired members of the United Steelworkers (USW), I write in **strong opposition to the “Furthering Asbestos Claim Transparency (FACT) Act of 2013,” H.R. 982. This bill would violate the privacy of victims by publicly disclosing sensitive and private information.**

Each year about 10,000 people in the United States die from asbestos-related diseases. Hundreds of thousands of Americans and their families have suffered as a result of uncontrolled workplace exposure to asbestos which occurred even after the hazards were well documented. The system for compensating asbestos disease victims has had its share of problems, particularly as asbestos manufacturers try to limit their liability. In 1994, Congress passed legislation that allowed asbestos companies to set up bankruptcy trusts to compensate asbestos victims and reorganize under the bankruptcy law. These trusts are not adequately funded and often result in delays of compensation to victims.

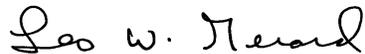
The FACT Act purports to address the problem of fraudulent claims submitted to these trusts. However, this problem does not exist, as was documented in the 2011 GAO report titled *Asbestos Injury Compensation: The Role and Administration of Asbestos Trusts*. These trusts regularly perform audits of claims and as of the date of the GAO report, not a single fraudulent claim had been detected.

H.R. 982 is an unnecessary and harmful measure that could discourage claims from deserving victims because it would require that personal information be publicly disclosed, including their name, last four digits of their Social Security number, exposure history, related payment information, and the basis – or health reason – for the trust to compensate them. Employers, insurance companies, workers compensation carriers and others would have unrestricted access to this personal information that could be used to blacklist workers from employment, to fight compensation claims, or for identity theft.

Many current and former USW members have been exposed to asbestos on the job and subsequently suffer from debilitating disease. We cannot allow these victims – who in most cases succumb to their illness - and their families to be victimized yet again. They shouldn't have to weigh their risk of potential discrimination or identity theft against their right to file a claim for compensation for their work-related illness.

Again, we urge you to vote “NO” on H.R. 982, the FACT Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leo W. Gerard".

Leo W. Gerard
International President

LWG/cdk