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Dedication

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WEST VIRGINIA LAW REVIEW

DEDICATION

Energy production is a controversial topic of global concern. International headlines recognize the importance of energy independence, renewable fuels, and clean coal; politicians at every level are discussing solutions to meet the world's escalating demand for power.

West Virginia plays a central role in this global debate. Internationally recognized as a key coal producer, our state generates approximately fifteen percent of all coal produced in the United States. West Virginia is home to four percent of the world's coal reserves, and it leads the nation in coal exports.

West Virginia also leads the nation in underground coal production, a fact many people came to understand when the Sago Mine disaster made headlines around the world. In January 2006, an underground explosion inside the Sago Mine, located in central West Virginia, led to the deaths of twelve miners and left another in critical condition. For a few days, the world followed the delayed rescue effort, the grieving families, the somber funerals. For a few days, we were all forced to recognize that men and women risk their lives, eight hours at a time, to power West Virginia and the world.

However, after the funerals were over and the media had left the small town of Sago, the tragedy faded from public view. Because the Sago Mine disaster warrants more scrutiny and analysis than a news cycle can provide, the *West Virginia Law Review* and the faculty of the West Virginia University College of Law organized a two-part symposium, where industry officials, mine workers, and government regulators openly and thoughtfully discussed strategies for improving coal mine safety.

The 2007 *West Virginia Law Review's* Coal Symposium, *Thinking Outside of the Box: A Post-Sago Look at Coal Mine Safety*, drew internationally recognized experts to the College of Law to share their expertise in lectures and articles that are now memorialized in this cutting-edge issue. Specifically, this issue of our Law Review presents a critical analysis of existing mine safety policies and offers innovative solutions to longstanding safety problems.

Although the symposium attendees offered differing comparative, constructive, and practical solutions to the problems presented by underground mining, all agreed on one thing: we must adopt a policy of zero tolerance for mining related deaths. With this shared commitment, the Sago Mine accident may someday be recognized not only as one of our nation's most significant mining tragedies, but also as a turning point in coal mine safety.

I am indeed pleased to introduce Volume 111, Issue 1, of the *West Virginia Law Review* and humbly dedicate this issue to all the families who have lost loved ones in mining accidents. It is imperative that the dialogue on mine safety continue across all levels of policy-making, and I am confident that this issue of our Law Review will make a positive and lasting contribution to this ongoing conversation.

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