

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20515

December 20, 2007

The Honorable George W. Bush  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to express our concern over a misrepresentation of United States policy on metallic mining investment in Central America and, in particular, El Salvador.

There appears to be a misperception perpetuated by a few select Members of Congress and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that mining activities in El Salvador should be curtailed as a result of a grant received by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). As you are aware, the purpose of an MCC grant is economic development, and as such, we believe it is inconsistent with the spirit of the MCC to discourage responsible industry from investing in natural resources. We are concerned that the interests of the United States are being adversely affected if parties carrying out an international anti-mining agenda are utilizing the MCC aid grant process as a basis for impeding sound mining investment activity.

As Members of Congress whose districts contain responsible mining operations, we feel strongly that the people of El Salvador, and any other nation, should have the benefits of a responsible mining industry available to them. Mining operations, when held to strict environmental standards, are a boon to communities that would otherwise not have jobs, infrastructure, health care, and other services. Additionally, modern mining companies have a great sense of social responsibility. In our districts, they provide funding for schools, roads, law enforcement, and other vital services. A regulated mining industry will keep mining companies accountable for their actions and will provide revenue for localities that will lead to the betterment of their residents.

The assertions by some Members of Congress and NGOs that gold and other metallic mining will necessarily lead to environmental degradation is misleading. If mining activities are permitted and regulated using strict environmental standards, air, water, and habitat quality can be maintained while producing jobs and service related economies that follow mining activities.

The United States has been the beneficiary of significant investment in exploration and mineral development for metallic minerals such as gold, silver, copper, zinc and

molybdenum which are critically needed in our high technology economy. Similarly, many United States investors actively participate in mining investment in other countries, which are participants in the North American Free Trade Agreement and the Central American Free Trade Agreement. This investment activity in metal mining produces many thousands of jobs in rural areas where job alternatives are lacking, as is the case in the impoverished region of El Salvador where the gold districts are located.

Utilizing the MCC aid grant process as a basis for impeding sound mining investment adversely affects the interests of the United States. Parties carrying out an international anti-mining agenda are not accurately depicting existing U.S. international or domestic policy.

It is clear to us that there is a need for a strong and articulate statement by the United States that the MCC aid grant does not in any way reflect a determination that metal mining in El Salvador is to be disfavored. To the contrary, the economic development goals of any MCC grant should be entirely consistent with investment in environmentally responsible metal mining and reclamation activity which creates good paying jobs and improved economic health in rural areas. We request that the United States communicate to the Government of El Salvador that it supports investment in responsible metal mining and reclamation activities.

Sincerely,



DEAN HELLER  
Member of Congress



DON YOUNG  
Member of Congress



JON PORTER  
Member of Congress