

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

## SILVER, THE "INDISPENSABLE METAL"

Dear Colleague,

Let's talk about mineral commodities. By now you might have seen the last "Dear Colleague" letter that invited you to join the Congressional Mining Caucus. That letter was an invitation for you and your staff to join in a conversation about the minerals that built America and will continue to build America long into the future. This "Dear Colleague" continues that invitation, but we also want to show why we believe it's to your advantage to join the caucus by looking at silver.

The mineral commodity silver! The stuff that used to be in lots of coins all round the world, but it was replaced by other metals somewhere in the 1960s. While no longer slipping through our fingers for that copy of the morning newspaper, silver has not, like the "Old Soldier," simply faded away. Far from fading away, silver is now an important industrial and investment metal with some very interesting uses and has some new uses that are even more promising and important.

Today silver is often called the "indispensable metal" for good reason. It has a multitude of uses. What do computers, mobile phones, plasma televisions and many bandages have in common? They all use silver. We're going to look at just a few you might not have considered: silver oxide batteries, anti-microbial coatings on medical dressings and implements, and silver impregnated cloth that is used in military clothing and maybe even in your exercise gear.

First, those silver oxide batteries! These use silver alloys as the cathode. The most common of these batteries is the small button-shaped silver oxide cell that is about 35% silver by weight. These silver batteries provide high voltages and long life and find their way into items like quartz watches. Billions of silver oxide-zinc batteries are supplied to world markets yearly, including miniature sized batteries for watches, cameras, and small electronic devices.

Next, medical applications for silver! Almost every hospital in North America uses silver in wound dressings and other wound care products. "Silvadiene," the worldwide trade name for a compound known as silver sulfadiazine, is used by to prevent bacterial infections in burn victims and allow the body to naturally restore the burnt tissue. A relatively new antimicrobial wound dressing with the name "Aquacel Ag" appears to provide immediate and sustained antimicrobial activity. These new dressings will kill numerous bacteria, including the methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), an infection which you have probably seen or heard about in the news. Many medical products now incorporate a layer of fabric containing silver for prevention of secondary infections including surgical gowns, hospital beds, and draperies. Other medical products such as catheters are coated with silver to prevent infections while in place.

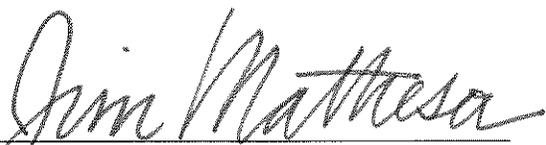
Lastly, silver particles embedded in the fabric of new exercise clothing will keep those sweaty workout clothes in your gym bag from making you unpopular at the office. An entire line of

uniforms and protective gear containing bacteria fighting silver has been developed for hockey players in Canada. In August 2005, USA Today carried a story about the British Army's decision to equip its soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan with germ resistant underwear made of cloth that contains silver. Closer to home, in October 2007 CNN.com reported on the US Army's Natick Soldier Research, Development and Engineering Center in Massachusetts experimenting with cloth containing metal and chlorine to develop protective suits and uniforms. According to the article, one of the metals that are of interest to the Center is silver.

The mining industry provides economic and national security benefits to all Americans while setting the world standard for health, safety, environmental remediation and reclamation. It provides many of the material goods that make your life better and you future bright. Small powerful batteries, germ fighting medical supplies and instruments, clothing that protects our soldiers and that keeps your gym bag under control are simply some of the possibilities for silver. But, as we know, silver is something that must be mined for us to use and apply to current and future efforts.

For us to develop constructive federal policies for the mining and mineral processing industries that will benefit the users of the industry's products, it will be incumbent on the Caucus to provide your staff with a ready source of information and education about the mining industry and its importance to all Americans. The Congressional Mining Caucus will hold meetings and otherwise serve as a resource during the legislative session to educate members and staff on the issues facing everyone in the mining industry and the primary mineral processing industries. Only by crafting sound federal policies will this vital industry continue to produce mineral resources for the use and benefit of your constituents which in short means all Americans. By joining with us you can show everyone that you are concerned about the health of the foundation of America's basic industries - mining.

To join the Congressional Mining Caucus, please contact Brad Mollet in Representative Jim Matheson's office at 225-3011 or Lisa Tanner in Representative Bill Sali's office at 225-6611.  
Thanks!



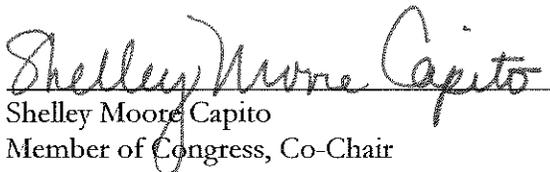
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