

Leo W. Gerard  
International President

July 24, 2006

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

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 850,000 members of the United Steelworkers (USW), I write to express our union's **strong opposition to H.R. 5766 and H.R. 3282** and this misguided approach to government accountability. The legislation represents an abdication of Congressional responsibility. The current authorization and appropriations process allows for the periodic assessment and funding of government efforts – Congress must not abandon its role but should take responsibility for its actions.

Our citizens want their government to be effective, efficient, accountable and responsive to the needs of its people as exercised through their elected leaders. The Tihart Bill (H.R. 5766) and the Brady Bill (H.R. 3282) while touted as a tool for good government, would do nothing to improve the workings of our federal government. Instead, both bills will create a series of sunset commissions, focused on reviewing clusters of agencies and programs. All federal programs and agencies could come under the commissions' examination.

Under the provisions of both measures, Congress would essentially refuse to pursue its oversight responsibilities and turn over decisions about the function and structure of the federal government to an unelected commission, appointed by the executive branch, which could conduct its deliberations without public hearings or public participation. The sunset commission proposals are not good government improvement proposals; their sole mission is to slash federal programs. The commission will examine whether or not programs and agencies are achieving their missions and goals, and further examine if there is duplication or conflict with other agencies, state or local government, *or the private sector*. The American people expect their elected representatives to exercise good judgment and act on their behalf, not abandon their responsibilities.

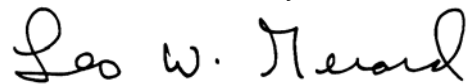
There has been a repeated attempt by the Administration for the elimination of a vast array of federal programs, including education, environmental, labor, community development and healthcare programs. While Congress has blocked these cuts through the budget process, the sunset commission would be the opportunity to make

these cuts a reality. Sunset legislation is bad as it relates to laws authorizing federal programs for worker protections. All workers' protections are in jeopardy and at risk of being eliminated. These include civil rights, whistleblower protections in the federal and private sector, Davis-Bacon requirements, and collective bargaining rights.

A sunset commission could be used to advance the Administration's privatization scheme. This legislation would create a new opportunity for advancing the privatization of Social Security and drastic cuts to Medicare and Medicaid. Congress would be required to vote on the commissions' recommendations in a fast track, up-or-down vote with no opportunity for amendments or debate. Decisions about the structure, function, and the very existence of government services are too important to be ripped from the representatives who were democratically elected to make them. Decisions this crucial regarding government programs and policies deserve the full debate and consideration of the elected representatives, with input from the public sector.

The United Steelworkers represent over 850,000 members in the paper, forestry products, steel, aluminum, tire and rubber, mining, glass, chemicals, petroleum, and other basic resource industries, as well as health care and service workers. We strongly urge you to oppose H.R. 5766 and H.R. 3282 and this attempt to dismantle important and beneficial federal programs without public input or Congressional oversight and expertise.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leo W. Gerard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Leo W. Gerard  
International President

LWG/ctl