



AFL-CIO

AMERICA'S UNIONS

**American Federation
of Labor and
Congress of Industrial
Organizations**

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March 9, 2022

Dear Trade Unionist:

A safe job is a fundamental right. On April 28, the labor movement will once again observe Workers Memorial Day to remember workers killed or injured on the job and to organize and strengthen the fight for safe workplaces. Our theme this year is “Organize! Safe Jobs Now.”

More than fifty years ago, the Occupational Safety and Health Act went into effect after the tireless efforts of the labor movement, who drew major attention to work-related deaths and injuries, organized for safer working conditions and demanded action from their government. The OSH Act and Mine Safety and Health Act promised workers the right to a safe job. Unions and our allies have fought hard to make that promise a reality—winning protections that have saved lives. Protections we've recently won on deadly silica dust, beryllium, and anti-retaliation for workers who report job injuries are critical, but they are not enough. There is much more work to be done to ensure every worker a safe job and to defend against corporate attacks.

Recent years have been especially trying times for working people. The world has faced the worst public health and occupational safety and health crisis of the last century, killing more than 900,000 people in the United States alone. People of color have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and suffer disproportionately from other workplace hazards. The pandemic also exposed the weaknesses in job safety agencies that are supposed to ensure workers are protected by employers and exposed the structural failures that have prevented workers from organizing in their workplaces to demand safer working conditions.

Each year, thousands of workers are killed and millions more suffer injury or illness because of our jobs. Far too many workers die from preventable hazards and many more workers become ill from exposure to toxic chemicals at work. Many employers and workers never see OSHA in their workplace. Penalties are still too low to be a deterrent. Workers are not adequately protected from retaliation when speaking out against unsafe working conditions and to freely join a union.

Letter to Trade Unionists

March 9, 2022

Page two

During the pandemic, workers came together to demand and win job safety protections from a highly contagious virus. Workers continue the fight for stronger protections in their workplaces and for stronger laws that hold employers accountable when they do not keep workers safe. The time to win safe workplaces is now.

This April 28, we reflect on the courageous actions of working people to fight for safer working conditions and focus on the need to organize for safe jobs for all of America's workers. Workers need protections from infectious diseases, heat illness, workplace violence, silica exposures in mining, exposure to asbestos and other toxic chemicals, and other hazards. The labor movement also will work to strengthen OSHA and MSHA, increase their budgets and improve enforcement, and ensure that employers are providing safe jobs now. We will increase efforts to protect the safety and health of Black, Latino and immigrant workers who are disproportionately affected by and especially targeted for speaking up against unsafe work.

We urge you to get involved and organize observances, remembrances, actions, activities, or digital campaigns in your workplaces and communities to highlight the toll of job injuries and deaths and call for action to organize for safe jobs now. We will stand united against the ongoing attacks on workers' rights and protections and have the freedom to organize for safer workplaces. We must and we will protect the right of every worker to a safe job and fight until that promise is fulfilled.

We are sharing materials and information to assist you. For additional information, to order copies of materials and to download our digital toolkit in the coming weeks, please visit the AFL-CIO website at www.aflcio.org/WorkersMemorialDay. Please let us know what you are planning by submitting your event on our website. If you need additional information, please contact the AFL-CIO Safety and Health Office at 202-637-5341 or oshmail@aflcio.org. Please join us this Workers Memorial Day, April 28, to organize together for safe jobs for all workers.

In solidarity,



Elizabeth H. Shuler
President

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Enclosures