

2022 Wyoming State AFL-CIO Resolution # 15
Safe Jobs—Every Worker's Fundamental Right

The right to a safe job is a fundamental worker right and a core union value. Every worker should be able to go to work and return home safely at the end of the day.

For hundreds of years—through organizing, bargaining, education, legislation and mobilization—working people and their unions have fought for safe and healthful working conditions to protect workers from injury, illness and death. We have made real progress, winning strong laws and protections that have made jobs safer, saved workers' lives and improved livelihoods.

Over the years, our fight has become more challenging as employers' opposition to workers' rights and protections has grown, and attacks on unions have intensified. Big Business and many politicians have launched an aggressive assault on worker protections. They are attempting to shift the responsibility for safe jobs from employers to individual workers and undermine the core responsibilities of workplace safety agencies such as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA). They are attempting to place agency budgets and enforcement programs on the chopping block.

Workers' lives are at stake. Each day in this country, 340 workers die due to job injuries and illnesses. Each year, millions of workers suffer serious workplace injuries. Long-recognized hazards, including most toxic chemical exposures and musculoskeletal disorders, remain unaddressed. Workers face increased risks like exposure to infectious diseases, heat, workplace violence and silica dust in mines. Many workers of color, including Black and Latino workers, hold some of the most dangerous jobs. Immigration status and lack of union representation make workers especially vulnerable to unsafe working conditions. Employers' increased use of temporary workers and independent contractors, and misclassification of employees as contractors, deprives workers of protections and has made it more difficult to hold employers accountable for meeting their responsibilities.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, employers and politicians have misused science, burned out staff, downplayed the role of the workplace in public health, ignored the disparities of exposures faced by workers of color, and ignored airborne transmission to undercut protections and eliminate their responsibilities to keep workers safe. Big Business has deepened its reliance

on cost-cutting measures and supported crisis standards that undermine safe jobs, and has sought to make these measures permanent.

We are fighting back and pushing forward to fulfill the fundamental right of every worker to a safe job. Workers, unions and our allies stand united to defend our gains and win stronger protections and rights for all workers.

Together, we will:

- Defend OSHA and MSHA laws, safety and health protections and workers' rights from attacks and strengthen laws to cover public sector workers and all other workers who lack legal protection, and all work arrangements.
- Fight any attempts to cut job safety agency budgets or weaken enforcement.
- Ensure that job safety protections are fully enforced and strengthen federal oversight of state OSHA plans.
- Seek permanent OSHA protections on COVID-19 and other infectious diseases that rely on the layered mitigation approach beyond Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance, and focus on employers' responsibilities to prevent workplace exposures and reduce transmission.
- Seek new protections against heat illness, workplace violence—including gun violence in workplaces—musculoskeletal disorders, combustible dust, toxic chemicals, silica in mines and other hazards through whatever means possible—including federal and state legislation, regulations and collective bargaining.
- Oppose regulatory “reform” legislation that would make it more difficult or impossible for agencies to issue needed safeguards.
- Educate working people and the public about the attacks on worker protections and rights, and mobilize to fight back. Strengthen workers' right to strike over unsafe working conditions in the private and public sectors.
- Increase efforts to protect the safety and health of Black, Latino and immigrant workers who are at increased risk of job-related death and injury, who work in some of the most dangerous jobs and who are vulnerable to exploitation.
- Ensure safe staffing levels and mental health support that prevent and address workplace injury, illness, fatigue and the risk to the public.
- Push for stronger anti-retaliation protections and worker participation rights, and ensure health and safety committees are used meaningfully and effectively to help workers address safety issues in their own workplaces.