



WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY 2021

Mourn for the Dead, Fight for the Living

FIFTY YEARS AGO on April 28, Workers Memorial Day, the Occupational Safety and Health Act went into effect, promising every worker the right to a safe job. The law was won because of the tireless efforts of the labor movement, which organized for safer working conditions and demanded government action. Unions and our allies have fought hard to make that promise a reality—winning protections that have made jobs safer and saved lives. But our work is not done. Each year, thousands of workers are killed and millions suffer injury or illness because of dangerous working conditions.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the inextricable link between workplace safety and health and our communities. The virus has killed more than 500,000 people in this country so far—devastating working families, with a disproportionate impact on people of color. Unions and our allies stepped up to demand and win job protections from this highly contagious virus. We organized for safe jobs and the right to speak out against unsafe working conditions. We demanded access to the ventilation, respirators and other measures that protect workers from inhaling the virus at work. Given the lack of federal action, unions won protections in states and held state and local leaders accountable. Organized labor and our allies were key to strengthening job safety to save lives.

Worker safety and workers' voice go hand in hand. The popularity of unions is at 65%—one of the highest marks since the OSH Act was implemented in 1971—and 60 million nonunion workers say they would vote for a voice on the job today. That is why America's labor movement is leading the campaign to pass the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, which would give all workers who want to form a

union a fair path to do so. Strong unions hold employers and the government accountable to keep workers safe. Strong unions raise the baseline level of job safety protections for all.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the lack of resources and accountability for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) to ensure workers are protected on the job, as well as the structural failures that have prevented workers from organizing for safer working conditions. Workplace safety agencies have been hollowed out with a reduction in staff and a stagnant budget. Many workers never see OSHA in their workplace. Penalties are too low to be a deterrent. Workers are not adequately protected to speak out against unsafe working conditions and to join a union without retaliation. As we look to the next 50 years of national worker protections, Congress must strengthen workplace safety agencies to renew their promise to working people, and issue life-saving protections against workplace violence, infectious diseases, heat illness, silica in mining and toxic chemicals—preventable hazards that kill tens of thousands of workers each year.

On April 28, the unions of the AFL-CIO will observe Workers Memorial Day to remember those who have suffered and died on the job, and to renew the fight for safe jobs. We will mobilize to pass the PRO Act, so workers have a voice on the job. We will stand united to strengthen workers' rights and protections, and demand resources and actions needed for job safety enforcement. We will fight for the right of every worker to a safe job, until that promise is fulfilled.

OBSERVE WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY APRIL 28 PASS THE PRO ACT

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO



APRIL 28

#1uSafety
#IWMD2021
#WMD2021

**MOURN
FOR THE DEAD
FIGHT
FOR THE LIVING**

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF
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WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY

Decades of struggle by working people and our unions have improved working conditions and made jobs safer, but it has not been enough. This year we have an opportunity to strengthen our rights and protections, so everyone can come home safely at the end of a work shift, and without chronic illnesses from exposures at work.

As we grieve those we have lost from COVID-19 and other workplace hazards, we must continue to push forward. We must:

- Ensure that all workers have the necessary protections from COVID-19 at work.
- Pass the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act to ensure workers have a safety voice on the job and the right to freely form a union without employer interference or intimidation.
- Pass the Protecting America's Workers Act to provide OSHA protection to the millions of workers without it, stronger criminal and civil penalties for companies that seriously violate job safety laws, and improved anti-retaliation protections.
- Increase efforts to protect the safety and health of Black, Latino and immigrant workers, who are disproportionately affected and especially targeted for speaking up against unsafe working conditions.
- Increase the job safety budgets and improve job safety enforcement.
- Win new protections on workplace violence, silica exposure in mining, heat illness, exposure to asbestos and other toxic chemicals, and other hazards.
- Defend hard-won safety and health protections and workers' rights from attacks.

WHAT YOU CAN DO ON WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY

Things are still a little different as we continue safety practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there are still many ways to recognize Workers Memorial Day and keep everyone safe from COVID-19.

- Organize an online campaign to call for stronger safety and health protections using our digital toolkit, which may be found at www.afcio.org/WorkersMemorialDay. Demand that elected officials put workers' well-being over corporate interests.
- Use the AFL-CIO's digital toolkit to call for the Senate to pass the PRO Act to ensure all workers have a voice on the job.
- Hold a virtual candlelight vigil, memorial service or moment of silence to remember those who have died on the job, and highlight job safety problems at workplaces in our community.
- Host a phone event or webinar with members of Congress in their districts. Involve injured workers and family members who can talk firsthand about the need for strong safety and health protections, the ability to speak up against unsafe working conditions, and joining together in union to keep workplaces safe. Invite local religious and community leaders and other allies to participate in the event.
- Conduct virtual workshops to empower workers to report job safety hazards and exercise workplace rights. Invite union members, nonunion workers and community allies to participate.
- Create a memorial at a workplace or in a community where workers have been killed on the job.
- Create and share an online photo and storyboard campaign on social media to remember workers who have been killed on the job.
- If you are working during the pandemic, organize an outdoor, socially distanced event at your workplace to stand together to protect all workers' right to a safe job, and to hold your employer accountable for keeping you safe.
- Invite the press to your Workers Memorial Day events to increase public awareness of the dangers working people face on the job.
- Come together in person once this pandemic is over. As a labor movement, we Mourn for the Dead and Fight for the Living on April 28, and every day of the year.