



THE PRO ACT: WORKER SAFETY AND WORKER VOICE

- Fifty years ago on April 28 (chosen by the AFL-CIO in 1989 as the date to observe 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 in 1970 because of the tireless efforts of the labor movement and allies, who drew major attention to work-related deaths, disease and injuries, organized for safer working conditions and demanded action from their government.
- Since 1970, unions and our allies have fought hard to make that promise a reality—winning protections that have made jobs safer and saved lives. But there is much to be done before the promise to keep all workers safe on the job, during the pandemic and beyond, can be fulfilled.
- Workers, knowing that the only way to have a safe workplace is to come together, organized for change. The central involvement of organized unions is the only factor that strengthened job safety enforcement in the Trump administration. Decades of evidence shows that unionized workplaces are safer workplaces.
- The popularity of unions is at 65 percent, one of the highest marks since the OSH Act was implemented in 1971. 60 million non-union workers say they would vote for a voice on the job today if given the chance.
- That is why America's labor movement and our allies are launching a full-scale, national campaign to pass the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, which would give the tens of millions of workers who want to form a union a fair path to do so.
- Worker safety and worker voice go hand in hand. And as we grow our movement, we must use those voices to advocate for a strong workplace safety agenda.

- The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the weaknesses in the OSH Act and OSHA and MSHA's capabilities to ensure workers are protected on the job and in structural failures that have prevented workers' from organizing in their workplaces to demand safer working conditions.
- The pandemic also highlighted the inextricable link between workplace safety and health and the safety and health of the community. Public health cannot begin to be addressed without attending to the needs and safety of workers on the job. The disproportionate impacts on people of color, widely represented in the essential workforce—health care, food supply, transit, grocery, corrections—has been devastating.
- The Trump administration left the safety agencies hollowed out with reduced staff and a stagnant budget. And exploited major gaps in protections exposed by the pandemic.
- Immediately and throughout this crisis, unions and our allies stepped into action to demand and win protections on the job from this highly contagious virus. When the Trump administration refused to take action despite our repeated cries, we demanded change directly in our workplaces. We organized for safe jobs for every worker and the right to speak out against unsafe working conditions.
- Unions won protections in states and held state and local leaders accountable. We demanded access to the ventilation, personal protective equipment and other measures to protect workers from inhaling the virus at work.
- 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 get sick from exposure to toxic chemicals.
- Many employers and workers never see OSHA in their workplace. Penalties are still too low to be a deterrent. Workers are not adequately protected without retaliation to speak out against unsafe working conditions and to freely join a union.
- On April 28, 2021, 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 come together this year to call for action to protect workers from COVID-19 at work and stronger job safety and health protections and enforcement. We will organize to pass the PRO Act, so workers have a right to form a union and have a voice on the job. We will fight for the right of every worker to a safe job until that promise is fulfilled.
- As we grieve those we have lost from COVID-19 and other workplace hazards, we must fight and continue to push forward. We must:
 - Pass the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act to ensure workers have safe jobs and the right to freely form a union without employer interference or intimidation.
 - Pass the Protecting America's Workers Act (PAWA) 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.
 - Ensure that all workers have the necessary protections from COVID-19 at work.

- 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.
- Increase the job safety budgets and improve job safety enforcement.
- 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.