



INTERNATIONAL UNION, UNITED AUTOMOBILE, AEROSPACE & AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENT WORKERS OF AMERICA – UAW

RAY CURRY, *PRESIDENT*

FRANK STUGLIN, *SECRETARY-TREASURER*

VICE-PRESIDENTS: CHUCK BROWNING • TERRY DITTES • CINDY ESTRADA

April 21, 2022

TO: Local Union Presidents and Recording Secretaries

SUBJECT: *Workers Memorial Day*

Greetings:

April 28th, Workers Memorial Day, is a day of remembrance honoring all those who lost their lives, were seriously injured, or were sickened by their work. But it is also a day to recommit ourselves to the promise that every worker has a fundamental right to a safe job. Fulfilling this promise requires that we recommit to the fight for a workplace free of hazards.

April 28, 2022, marks 52 years since Congress passed the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 into law. The OSH Act was passed because of the relentless efforts of the labor movement. When OSHA was formed fifty years ago, the daily toll was 38 workers killed on the job. Enforcement of OSHA regulations, as well as the hard-fought victories by labor unions and our allies, have reduced the number of workplace fatalities to less than 14 per day, a 62% reduction. Unfortunately, many rules are still 50 years old, out of date and too lax for the 5,000 workers who die on the job each year. An additional 50,000 workers die prematurely each year from occupational diseases that could be prevented by reducing exposures to the myriad of hazards unaddressed by OSHA rules.

OSHA's rules and activities cannot replace strong union advocacy and the protections we gain from collective bargaining. Through negotiations, the UAW achieves health and safety provisions that bolster OSHA rules but also go far beyond those basic regulations to reduce ergonomic hazards, workplace violence, chemical exposures, noise, and unsafe equipment.

Union contract language gives us a voice at the workplace and protects those who use their voice to demand safe and healthy work. The weakness of OSHA's protections for workers who speak out for safety is well known to those who have lost pay, been disciplined, an even fired for reporting hazards. Nonunion workers who complain about safety hazards rely on the weakest whistleblower provisions of any other government agency. But union workers have the power of the contract to protect their right to speak out and make change happen.

We all recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating on working families. Throughout this global public health crisis, the importance of a safe environment for every worker has become even more apparent. As a union we have taken action to demand protections for our members from this virus and we continue to fight for fresh air, ventilation, personal protective equipment, testing, contact tracing and health care treatments for the long-term effects of this disease.

Our Union has always led the fight for safer working conditions so that our members can return home each day to their loved ones and enjoy a retirement free of disease. On April 28th, our UAW family mourns for those who have tragically lost their lives and we honor them by continuing the fight for the living.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ray Curry". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ray Curry, President
International Union, UAW

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