



PROTECT WORKERS NOW

WITHIN JUST A FEW WEEKS' time at the start of 2006, the disasters at the Sago mine and five other mines claimed the lives of 18 miners. These tragedies focused the nation's attention on the dangers faced by workers and the weaknesses in job safety protections. But the Sago disaster was not an isolated event. Before this year is over, thousands more workers will be killed on the job and millions will be injured or diseased.

More than three decades ago, Congress passed the Occupational Safety and Health Act and the Mine Safety and Health Act, promising every worker the right to a safe job. Unions and our allies have fought hard to make that promise a reality, winning protections that have saved hundreds of thousand of lives. But the fight for safe jobs has gotten harder as corporate interests, joined by the Bush administration and conservative Republicans, have moved to roll back and weaken protections.

Since 2001 the administration has blocked or withdrawn dozens of important safety rules, including a number of measures that may have prevented the recent mine tragedies. Voluntary compliance has been favored over issuing new protective standards and enforcement.

Industry officials have been put in charge of government safety programs.

In Congress, Republican leaders have ignored calls to strengthen the mine safety law, and instead are pushing legislation that would gut OSHA enforcement.

And many employers, in a race to the bottom in a global economy, are looking to cut wages and benefits and loosen protections. With fewer and fewer workers having the protection of a union, more workers are afraid to speak out and raise job safety concerns, fearing retaliation and firing.

On April 28, the unions of the AFL-CIO observe Workers Memorial Day to remember those who have suffered and died on the job and to renew the fight for safe workplaces. We will fight to improve the mine safety law and protections for all workers. We will fight to make workers' issues a priority and to keep and create good jobs in this country. We will fight for the freedom of workers to form unions and, through their unions, to speak out and bargain for safe jobs, respect and a better future. We will keep fighting until the promise of safe jobs for all workers is a reality.

Mourn for the Dead ■ Fight for the Living

OBSERVE WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY. APRIL 28. AFL-CIO

WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY

APRIL 28

DECADES OF STRUGGLE by workers and their unions have significantly improved working conditions. But the fight to protect workers must continue. We must demand strong enforcement of job safety laws, defend the gains we have won and push forward to address problems that remain.

- Companies that repeatedly break job safety laws, killing workers, face only weak penalties.
- Workplace standards are out of date and inadequate.
- Many long-recognized hazards have not been addressed, and new workplace hazards that emerge get no attention.
- Ergonomic hazards still cripple and injure more workers than any other workplace hazard.
- Immigrant workers are being killed on the job in record numbers.
- Millions of workers have no protections under the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

WHAT YOU CAN DO ON WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY

- Hold a candlelight vigil, memorial service or moment of silence to remember those who have died on the job and to highlight job safety problems in your community and at your workplace.
- Organize a rally to highlight the job safety and health problems in your community or at your workplace and to show how the union is fighting to improve protections.
- Create memorials at workplaces or in communities where workers have been killed on the job.
- Distribute workplace fliers and organize a call-in to congressional representatives during lunch times or break times. Tell your members of Congress to support stronger mine safety and OSHA protections. Tell them to oppose efforts to weaken the OSHA law.
- Hold a public meeting with members of Congress in their home districts. Bring injured workers and family members who can talk firsthand about the need for strong safety and health protections. Invite local religious leaders and other allies to participate in the meeting.

For additional information, contact:

AFL-CIO Safety and Health, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006;
phone: 202-637-5366; fax: 202-508-6978; e-mail: oshmail@afclcio.org; website: www.afclcio.org

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