

# RENEW THE PROMISE

## SAFE JOBS FOR ALL

**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**