

Senator John Kerry's Record on Occupational Safety and Health Issues

Senator John Kerry is well known for his support of issues of importance to American workers. For example, throughout his 20-year career as a U.S. Senator, he has voted correctly (100%) on all of the workplace safety and health legislation that has been brought before the U.S. Senate.

Following is a summary of his voting record on key legislative initiatives:

>> Fighting for the OSHA Ergonomics Standard

In 2000 and 2001, Senator Kerry voted for worker safety and health and against the efforts led by the Bush Administration, Republicans in the U.S. Senate, and the business community to kill the OSHA Ergonomics Standard.

In November 2000, after more than a decade of struggle by CWA and the rest of the American labor movement, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration promulgated a comprehensive Ergonomics Standard. This standard would have led to a significant reduction in the number one safety and health hazard in the U.S.—the occurrence of often-disabling worker repetitive motion illnesses and injuries.

The initiative to overturn the standard passed, thus denying ergonomic protections for hundreds of thousands of CWA members and millions of American workers.

>> Supporting Truck Safety Legislation

In 2001, Senator Kerry joined a majority of his fellow Senators and voted in favor of legislation to prohibit unsafe trucks and buses from entering the U.S. from Mexico.

Citing provisions of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Bush Administration had proposed to open U.S. roads and highways to Mexican trucks. Nearly half of those motor vehicles, which were not required to meet the same federal safety standards as American trucks, were found to have serious safety violations.

>> Opposing The TEAM Act

In 1996, Senator Kerry voted correctly in opposing the TEAM Act. This legislation, driven by the efforts of Big Business and many Republicans, was a frontal assault on workers' rights. The legislation would have denied the right of workers to pick their own representatives for employee/employer committees that deal with subjects like wages, hours, and working conditions (including occupational safety and health). In effect, if this legislation had passed, it would have allowed employers to create employer-dominated "company unions."

>> Strengthening OSHA Criminal Penalties

In 1990, Senator John Kerry voted correctly by supporting legislation and efforts of the American labor movement to initiate stronger OSHA penalties against employers in instances where an employer had willfully allowed workers to be exposed to workplace safety and health hazards that resulted in serious injury or death.

This legislation followed the federal government's release of data demonstrating that since 1971, when the Occupational Safety and Health Act became effective, some 200,000 workers had died on the job. Yet, the U.S. Justice Department had prosecuted only 14 cases and it was not until 1989 that an employer had spent even one day in jail for safety and health violations that resulted in serious injury or death.

Unfortunately, with the support of Big Business, the Senate prevented the passage of this legislation.

Clearly, Senator John Kerry has a proven record working to improve occupational safety and health protections as well as fighting against attacks by Big Business to weaken existing safety and health protections.

Contact the CWA Occupational Safety and Health Department at www.cwasafetyandhealth.org.



The Bush Administration's Record on Occupational Safety and Health Issues

Since taking office in January 2001, the Bush Administration has largely ignored the occupational safety and health needs of American workers. Representing its corporate allies, the Bush Administration has overturned or blocked dozens of important workplace protections, as well as weakened occupational safety and health programs. These actions have resulted in needless worker exposures to serious workplace hazards.

Following are highlights of the Bush Administration's failure to provide safe and healthful workplace protections:

>> **Revoked the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) Ergonomics Standard**

Inadequate workplace ergonomics accounts for more occupational injuries and illnesses, as well as lost productivity and revenue, than any other safety and health issue. Thus, in 1990, CWA joined the AFL-CIO and several other unions in petitioning the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to develop a comprehensive ergonomics standard. After 11 years of struggle, in November 2000, the Clinton Administration promulgated an ergonomics standard. The Bush Administration, with support from Republicans and anti-worker business allies, revoked the OSHA Ergonomics Standard in March 2001. This outrageous assault upon worker safety and health left hundreds of thousands of CWA members and millions of U.S. workers without ergonomic protections.

In addition, shortly after killing the OSHA Ergonomics Standard, the Bush Administration:

>> **Repealed the OSHA rule requiring the identification of musculoskeletal/repetitive motion injuries and illnesses on the workplace injury/illness log (OSHA 300 Log)**

The OSHA Act requires employers to complete and maintain these records. This action has led to significant employer underreporting of musculoskeletal repetitive motion injuries and illnesses.

>> **Nominated Eugene Scalia as the U.S. Department of Labor's chief lawyer**

Scalia is one of the leaders of American industry's campaign to dismantle the OSHA Ergonomics Standard.

>> **Failed to provide adequate occupational safety and health protections for U.S. Airlines workers**

The Bush Administration has failed to take any action to adopt safety and health standards and protections for U.S. aviation workers. Rather, it has allowed the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to provide weak, voluntary safety and health coverage or, put another way, virtually no safety and health protection for aviation employees (including some 35,000 flight attendants who belong to the Association of Flight Attendants/CWA).

>> **Stopped all new Occupational Safety and Health rules**

The Bush Administration has killed dozens of OSHA worker protection measures including rules on cancer-causing substances, reactive chemicals, and infectious diseases. In addition, by not issuing any new workplace safety and health standards during its four-year term, the Bush Administration has the worst occupational safety and health record in OSHA's entire history.

>> **Favored voluntary protection programs instead of enforcement programs**

The Bush Administration has made the establishment and expansion of employer voluntary protection programs, partnerships and alliances, and outreach assistance, rather than comprehensive enforcement of OSHA standards a top priority. In most cases, contrary to the OSHA Act, the Bush Administration has excluded unions from representation in these activities.

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