

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 18, 2026

The Honorable Lori Chavez-DeRemer  
Secretary of Labor  
U.S. Department of Labor  
200 Constitution Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20210

David Keeling  
Assistant Secretary of Labor for  
Occupational Safety and Health  
200 Constitution Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Secretary Chavez-DeRemer and Assistant Secretary Keeling

We write with concern that the Department of Labor is abandoning its mission to “improve working conditions...and assure work-related benefits and rights”<sup>1</sup> for American workers by rolling back safety regulations and systemically reducing enforcement efforts at the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

OSHA was created by the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSH Act), signed into law in 1970 by President Richard Nixon.<sup>2</sup> The OSH Act vested OSHA with the responsibility to set and enforce safety and health standards for American workers, and OSHA has protected millions of Americans at work ever since for more than 50 years.<sup>3</sup> In the year that OSHA was created, 38 American workers were killed at work every day.<sup>4</sup> Today, though the American workforce has more than doubled, workers are far safer, and the daily fatality rate has declined by more than 60 percent.<sup>5</sup> There is still a long way to go—no American worker should toil in an unsafe workplace—but OSHA has made critical progress in keeping workers safe and reducing deaths and injuries on the job.

But the Trump Administration is conducting an attack on workers from all sides. The Administration has severed collective bargaining agreements that protected federal employees and has stripped hundreds of thousands of federal workers of their right to join a union.<sup>6</sup> The President’s chaotic trade war and sweeping tariffs have caused consumer prices to rise, making it harder for workers to afford basic necessities, and squeezed American businesses, sometimes forcing them to reduce workers’ hours—or fire them outright.<sup>7</sup> And the President has weakened

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, "About Us," <https://www.dol.gov/general/aboutdol>.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, "The Job Safety Law of 1970: Its Passage Was Perilous," Judson MacLaury, March 1981, <https://www.dol.gov/general/aboutdol/history/osha>.

<sup>3</sup> Occupational Health and Safety Administration, "OSHA at 50," <https://www.osha.gov/osha50>.

<sup>4</sup> Occupational Health and Safety Administration, "Commonly Used Statistics," <https://www.osha.gov/data/commonstats>.

<sup>5</sup> American Journal of Public Health, "The Occupational Safety and Health Administration at 50: Protecting Workers in a Changing Economy," David Michaels and Jordan Barab, May 2020, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7144438/>.

<sup>6</sup> New York Times, "Trump Orders Have Stripped Nearly Half a Million Federal Workers of Union Rights," Eileen Sullivan, September 1, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/01/us/politics/trumps-unions-federal-workers.html>.

protections for workers, illegally firing National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) Member Gwynne Wilcox—supposedly due to her bias towards workers.<sup>8</sup>

Now, the Administration has proposed massive cuts to OSHA's funding,<sup>9</sup> threatening the agency's ability to effectively oversee more than 8 million worksites across the country.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, DOL has announced an ambitious deregulatory agenda that includes rolling back many of the regulations that OSHA has promulgated to keep American workers safe:<sup>11</sup>

- DOL has attempted to eliminate 34 offices—more than a third of the agency's 89 offices nationwide<sup>12</sup>—of the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), which protects coal miners from hazards like black lung disease. DOL only reversed course after public outcry.<sup>13</sup> You have also proposed a regulatory change that would undermine the MSHA's ability to keep miners safe by stripping MSHA district managers of their ability to require mine operators to improve plans for ventilation and preventing roof collapses in coal mines, as well as their authority to require changes to mine health and safety training programs.<sup>14</sup>
- DOL also attempted to eliminate 16 OSHA area offices by the end of 2025,<sup>15</sup> which would have left Oklahoma, Arkansas, Tennessee, Louisiana, and Delaware workers left without a single OSHA area office.<sup>16</sup> DOL again only reversed course after public outcry.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Axios, "Grocery inflation highest since 2022 as Trump tariffs pile up," Kelly Tyko and Ben Berkowitz, September 11, 2025, <https://www.axios.com/2025/09/11/trump-tariffs-grocery-prices-rise-cpi>.

<sup>8</sup> Economic Policy Institute, "100 ways Trump has hurt workers in his first 100 days," Celine McNicholas, Samantha Sanders, Josh Bivens, et al., April 25, 2025, <https://www.epi.org/publication/100-days-100-ways-trump-hurt-workers/>.

<sup>9</sup> Labor Tribune, "Trump OSHA budget would cut 10,000 job safety inspections," Mark Gruenberg, June 19, 2025, <https://labortribune.com/trump-osha-budget-would-cut-10000-job-safety-inspections/>.

<sup>10</sup> Occupational Safety and Health Administration, "Commonly Used Statistics," <https://www.osha.gov/data/commonstats#:~:text=Federal%20OSHA%20coverage,and%2085%20local%20area%20offices>.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, "Secretary Chavez-DeRemer unveils aggressive deregulatory efforts in push to put the American worker first," press release, July 1, 2025, <https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/osec/osec20250701-0>.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, "Mine Safety and Health Administration," p. 2, November 2020, <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/general/foia/presidential-transition-docs/2021/MSHA-TransitionDocument-2020-11-03.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*; AP News, "Trump administration reverses planned closures of 3 dozen US mine safety offices," John Raby, May 29, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/mine-safety-office-closure-msha-doge-trump-43fd355260d7c2373f48a25e35455f5b>.

<sup>14</sup> AP News, "Trump's Labor Department proposes more than 60 rule changes in a push to deregulate workplaces," Cathy Bussewitz, July 22, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/labor-department-deregulation-worker-safety-wages-223309692fecb3721ef377154e7689ed>; Safety and Health Magazine, "Trump administration publishes its latest regulatory agenda," September 4, 2025, <https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/27273-trump-administration-publishes-its-latest-regulatory-agenda>.

<sup>15</sup> AP News, "DOGE lease cancellations: Which government offices could be closed this year and when," March 14, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/doge-lease-cancellations-list-2b19594b17bb66cfc3122dd82c5663b8>.

<sup>16</sup> The American Prospect, "OSHA Office Closure in 'Cancer Alley' Raises Fears About Risks to Workers," Marcus Baram, April 18, 2025, <https://prospect.org/2025/04/18/2025-04-18-osha-office-closure-cancer-alley-louisiana/>.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*; Construction Forum, "Former OSHA Chief: Closing OSHA Offices Will Increase Injuries, Illnesses, Deaths," David Michaels, April 3, 2025, <https://constructforstl.org/former-osha-chief-closing-osha-offices-will-increase-injuries-illnesses-deaths/>; Office of Rep. Ilhan Omar, "Ranking Member Omar Opening Remarks at Subcommittee

- DOL has announced its intention to repeal a requirement for employers to provide adequate lighting at construction sites—even though 5% of construction worker deaths are caused by visibility issues, including poor lighting.<sup>18</sup>
- Another proposal in your agency’s deregulatory agenda would prevent the agency from applying the “general duty clause” in careers that are “inherently risky”—including athletes, actors, dancers, musicians, other entertainers, and journalists. The general duty clause allows OSHA to hold employers accountable for unsafe working conditions even when there is no specific standard or rule in place to cover a situation.<sup>19</sup>
- You have proposed rolling back medical evaluation requirements for filtering facepiece respirators and loose-fitting powered air-purifying respirators for workers who work in environments where respirators are required, as well as loosening respirator requirements for workers exposed to dangerous materials like lead, asbestos, and formaldehyde, as well as chemicals known to be carcinogens.<sup>20</sup> This means that workers will no longer be

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Hearing on OSHA’s Mission to Keep Workers Safe," press release, May 15, 2025, <https://omar.house.gov/media/press-releases/ranking-member-omar-opening-remarks-subcommittee-hearing-oshas-mission-keep>.

<sup>18</sup> Safety Science, "Visibility-related fatalities related to construction equipment," Jimmie W. Hinze and Jochen Teizer, June 2011, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0925753511000099>.

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Federal Register Notice, "Occupational Safety and Health Standards; Interpretation of the General Duty Clause: Limitation for Inherently Risky Professional Activities," July 1, 2025, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/07/01/2025-12236/occupational-safety-and-health-standards-interpretation-of-the-general-duty-clause-limitation-for>.

<sup>20</sup> Safety Health Magazine, “Trump administration publishes its latest regulatory agenda,” September 4, 2025, <https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/27273-trump-administration-publishes-its-latest-regulatory-agenda>; U.S. Department of Labor, Federal Register Notice, "Vinyl Chloride," July 1, 2025, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/07/01/2025-11644/vinyl-chloride>; U.S. Department of Labor, Federal Register Notice, "Methylenedianiline," July 1, 2025, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/07/01/2025-11643/methylenedianiline>; U.S. Department of Labor, Federal Register Notice, "Methylene Chloride," July 1, 2025, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/07/01/2025-11642/methylene-chloride>; U.S. Department of Labor, Federal Register Notice, "Lead," July 1, 2025, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/07/01/2025-11641/lead>; U.S. Department of Labor, Federal Register Notice, "Inorganic Arsenic," July 1, 2025, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/07/01/2025-11640/inorganic-arsenic>; U.S. Department of Labor, Federal Register Notice, "Formaldehyde," July 1, 2025, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/07/01/2025-11639/formaldehyde>; U.S. Department of Labor, Federal Register Notice, "Ethylene Oxide," July 1, 2025, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/07/01/2025-11638/ethylene-oxide>; U.S. Department of Labor, Federal Register Notice, "Cotton Dust," July 1, 2025, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/07/01/2025-11637/cotton-dust>; U.S. Department of Labor, Federal Register Notice, "Coke Oven Emissions," July 1, 2025, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/07/01/2025-11636/coke-oven-emissions>; U.S. Department of Labor, Federal Register Notice, "Cadmium," July 1, 2025, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/07/01/2025-11635/cadmium>; U.S. Department of Labor, Federal Register Notice, "Benzene," July 1, 2025, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/07/01/2025-11634/benzene>; U.S. Department of Labor, Federal Register Notice, "Asbestos," July 1, 2025, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/07/01/2025-11633/asbestos>; U.S. Department of Labor, Federal Register Notice, "Acrylonitrile," July 1, 2025, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/07/01/2025-11632/acrylonitrile>; U.S. Department of Labor, Federal Register Notice, "13 Carcinogens (4-Nitrobiphenyl, etc.)," July 1, 2025,

screened for undiagnosed medical conditions that could make wearing a respirator difficult or dangerous.

But you are not only rolling back rules that protect workers—OSHA also appears to be taking a lighter hand in enforcing even the rules that still exist. According to OSHA statistics comparing the months of April through September 2025 with the same period in 2024, the agency reduced workplace inspections by 20 percent. Those statistics also show a 42 percent decrease in the number of “willful violations” found during inspections by OSHA during the months of April-September of 2025 as compared to the same period in 2024.<sup>21</sup> The penalty for willful violations is about 10 times higher than the penalty for other types of violations,<sup>22</sup> and this reduction in findings of willful violations indicates that OSHA inspectors may be being encouraged to issue citations for lesser violations, allowing employers who commit serious safety violations to avoid facing proportional consequences. A third party’s independent analysis of OSHA enforcement actions during the first nine months of the Trump Administration found that the agency had brought 35 percent fewer cases than the same period in previous administrations. It also found that OSHA imposed just \$94 million in penalties—47% lower than the first nine months of the last 17 years. <sup>23</sup> If employers know that they are unlikely to face hefty fines, they may be less likely to adhere to safety standards that keep American workers safe in their places of employment.

The Trump Administration claims that it is a “champion of the American worker,”<sup>24</sup> but DOL has demonstrated its disregard for workers’ lives, rolling back protections that keep workers safe and hobbling the agency that is tasked with overseeing worker safety. Your agency has tried to cloak your deregulatory agenda in the language of “putting workers first,” but the reality is that the Labor Department is prioritizing the interests of unscrupulous employers over Americans who work hard in dangerous environments to provide for their families.

In order to understand why the Labor Department and OSHA appear to have abandoned their mission to protect workers, and to inform our legislative responsibilities regarding the operations of the Department, we request that you respond to the following questions by March 4, 2026:

1. DOL announced a deregulatory agenda that would comprise 63 regulatory rollbacks.<sup>25</sup> Only 52 of these proposals appear on the Federal Register or the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA)’s Unified Regulatory Agenda. What are the 11 remaining

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<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/07/01/2025-11631/13-carcinogens-4-nitrobiphenyl-etc>; U.S.

Department of Labor, Federal Register Notice, "1,3-Butadiene," July 1, 2025,

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/07/01/2025-11630/title-13-butadiene>; U.S. Department of Labor, Federal Register Notice, "1,2-dibromo-3-chloropropane,"

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/07/01/2025-11629/12-dibromo-3-chloropropane>.

<sup>21</sup> Information provided confidentially to the Office of Senator Warren.

<sup>22</sup> Occupational Safety and Health Administration, "OSHA Penalties," <https://www.osha.gov/penalties>.

<sup>23</sup> Good Jobs First, “Worker Protections in Freefall: The Collapse of Federal Labor Enforcement under the Second Trump Administration,” Siobhan Standaert, December 2025, <https://goodjobsfirst.org/worker-protections-in-freefall-the-collapse-of-federal-labor-enforcement-under-the-second-trump-administration/>.

<sup>24</sup> The White House, "President Trump Is Delivering for American Workers," September 1, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/2025/09/president-trump-is-delivering-for-american-workers/>.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, "Secretary Chavez-DeRemer unveils aggressive deregulatory efforts in push to put the American worker first," press release, July 1, 2025, <https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/osec/osec20250701-0>.

deregulatory actions that DOL plans to issue, and when can notices of these actions be expected?

2. Were any of the 11 OSHA regional offices whose leases were terminated by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) earlier this year<sup>26</sup> closed permanently?
3. Do you have plans to close OSHA regional offices?
4. How many inspections did OSHA complete in 2025? How does that compare with the number completed in 2024?
5. How many hazard alert letters did OSHA issue in 2025? How does that compare with the numbers completed by the same date in 2024?
6. Please provide figures showing the number of violations OSHA found in 2025, broken down by type of violation and the enforcement actions taken in response to these violations (i.e., informal settlements, appeals, and settlements), as well as figures showing the same information for 2024.
7. Have there been internal directives—written or otherwise—to OSHA inspectors or officials to reduce the number of workplaces inspected, reduce the number of citations issued for workplace safety violations, or to reduce citations for a certain type of violation?
8. What analysis led you to repeal the requirement for adequate lighting at construction sites?
  - a. What volume of injuries caused by construction workers operating in the dark would cause the Department to reconsider?
  - b. Which stakeholders were consulted in the making of this decision?
    - i. Were construction workers or construction workers’ unions consulted?
    - ii. Were construction industry stakeholders consulted?
9. How did you make the determination of which jobs have “inherent risk”? and should be excluded from the general duty clause?
  - a. Please explain how the Department defines “inherent risk” in this context.
  - b. Please describe the “inherent risk” posed by work as a professional musician.
  - c. Which stakeholders were consulted in the making of this decision?
    - i. Were any unions or professional organizations of the workers affected by this determination consulted?
    - ii. Were any sports or entertainment executives consulted?
10. What analysis led you to roll back testing requirements for respirators?

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<sup>26</sup> The American Prospect, "OSHA Office Closure in ‘Cancer Alley’ Raises Fears About Risks to Workers," Marcus Baram, April 18, 2025, <https://prospect.org/2025/04/18/2025-04-18-osha-office-closure-cancer-alley-louisiana/>.


- a. Which stakeholders were consulted in the making of this decision?
  - i. Were any unions or professional organizations of the workers affected by this decision consulted?

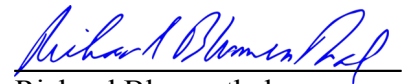
11. Why did OSHA decide to formally end its requirement to consult the Advisory Committee on Construction Safety and Health (ACCSH) when creating or modifying construction-related safety standards?


- a. Were construction workers or construction workers' unions consulted in making this decision?

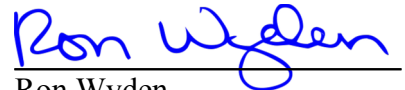
Thank you for your attention to this important matter.


Sincerely,


  
Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

  
Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator

  
Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator

  
Ron Wyden  
United States Senator

  
Angela D. Alsobrooks  
United States Senator

  
Alex Padilla  
United States Senator