

EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

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Press Office, 202-226-0853

House Democrats Introduce Bill to Reform Nation's Worker Health and Safety Law

Bill will strengthen penalties, protect more workers, and increase whistleblower protections

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Democrats on the House Education and Labor Committee, led by U.S. **Rep. Lynn Woolsey (D-CA)**, chair of the Workforce Protections Subcommittee, introduced legislation today that would help the nation's health and safety agencies to hold unscrupulous employers accountable for exposing their workers to preventable hazards.

The Protecting America's Workers Act (H.R. 2067) will strengthen and modernize the Occupational Safety and Health Act, the nation's law that ensures the health and safety of American workers.

"It has been more than 30 years since the passage of the OSH Act, and it is badly in need of reform. While thousands of workers have been saved as a result of OSHA, 16 workers are killed and 11,200 workers are injured or made ill each and every day," said Woolsey. "This legislation will strengthen OSHA by expanding coverage to millions of workers who are currently unprotected or inadequately protected, increasing civil and criminal penalties for those who violate the law, and by protecting those who blow the whistle on unsafe employer practices. I look forward to working with Chairman Miller and my colleagues on the committee to pass this legislation, and to partnering with Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis to ensure that every American worker gets the protections that they deserve."

"Beginning last Congress, we conducted a systematic examination of the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration and their ability to protect workers. We found that far too many employers were subject to a slap on the wrist or even let off the hook when they put their employee in danger," said **Rep. George Miller (D-CA)**, chairman of the full committee. "This legislation is vital to improving the health and safety of American workers."

Among other provisions, the bill would:

- Apply federal safety standards to workers who are not currently covered, including federal, state, and local employees, and some private sector employees;
- Protect workers who blow the whistle on unsafe workplace conditions;
- Increase penalties against employers for repeated and willful violations of the law, including making felony charges available when an employer's repeated and willful violation of the law leads to a worker's death or serious injury; and

- Give workers and their families the right to challenge reduction of fines and other penalties.

This Tuesday, April 28, is Workers' Memorial Day, a day to commemorate workers who have been killed on the job and to recommit to making workplaces safer. The Education and Labor Committee will hold a hearing on whether OSHA penalties are sufficient to deter health and safety violations.

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