



UWUA Health & Safety

W **HEREAS**, For generations, the UWUA has fought to improve health and safety on the job for our members. Private sector workers have benefited from the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) for nearly 50 years, yet there are no national health and safety standards for public employees. Furthermore, strong health and safety laws and regulations are under attack by greedy corporations and aided by their anti-worker allies in federal, state, and local government; and

WHEREAS, Our union has been a leader in improving workplace health and safety. At the national level, the UWUA has become increasingly involved in helping to formulate regulations and create higher standards, working with the American Society of Safety Professionals to strengthen ANSI Z-10 standard, providing a voice of the UWUA by having a seat on the National Safety Councils labor advisory board; and

WHEREAS, Even under the best circumstances, government standards are not enough. Better working conditions cannot be won without the commitment of local union health and safety activists. Every UWUA workplace should have a strong program for finding and fixing hazardous conditions. Not only do union safety and health programs improve working conditions, but they also build and strengthen our union; and

WHEREAS, The health and safety of workers is of paramount importance, and

WHEREAS, A strong and effective safety committee can help ensure that workplace hazards are identified and addressed in a timely and effective manner, and the union has a role to play in ensuring that workers have a safe and healthy workplace; and

WHEREAS, To assist our members in addressing workplace hazards, the UWUA created the Systems of Safety Hazard Awareness (SOS) program. These Power for America Training Trust (P4A) workshops are led by union members who teach their brothers and sisters to utilize their own skills and experience to identify and eliminate workplace hazards. We have brought the systems of safety training to our members throughout the country; and

WHEREAS, To better coordinate and share information, the UWUA created five regional and one national safety committee, comprised of safety officers from each region and industry. Committee members receive safety leadership training through P4A and work together regularly to discuss best practices, major events and emerging threats. The Committees are an important resource for all UWUA locals and members. UWUA Safety Officers have played a key role in ensuring safe procedures and practices by coordinating multiple local union response efforts to natural and man-made disasters; and

WHEREAS, The AFL-CIO has established April 28th as Workers' Memorial Day to remember those who have died on the job. April 28th also serves as a day to educate the general public and is increasingly recognized by unions around the world.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, The UWUA opposes any corporate, administrative or legislative efforts to weaken occupational health and safety laws, regulations, and enforcement. We condemn the rollback of hard fought OSHA regulations. We will work for passage of legislation to better protect worker rights and worker safety, including "Protecting America's Workers Act," federal legislation that would extend OSHA protections to all public employees; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, UWUA members must work to build a culture of safety at every level of our union. We have been particularly successful in creating safer working conditions for our members working in the water industry, a sector that had lacked a long tradition of health and safety awareness; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Every UWUA local union is urged to form a safety and health committee and to, wherever possible, hire a full-time safety officer. Local union leaders and members are also encouraged to participate in health and safety conferences and forums. National resources, including training and technical support are available to any local seeking to improve worker safety, whether day-to-day or during emergency situations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That each local union shall seek to establish a joint safety committee, consisting of equal numbers of union and management representatives, to meet on a regular basis to discuss workplace health and

safety issues. The committee shall seek to have the authority to:

- Identify hazards in the workplace and recommend corrective actions;
- Review accident and injury reports and make recommendations for improvements;
- Review and provide input on workplace safety policies and procedures;
- Conduct workplace inspections to identify potential hazards;
- Promote safety awareness and education among workers.

The committee shall be provided with the necessary resources and support to carry out its responsibilities effectively, including access to relevant information, training, and equipment. The committee shall have the power to bring safety concerns to the attention of management, and to stop work in situations where there is an imminent danger to worker health and safety; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Better union-wide coordination and information sharing will help us to save more lives and avoid more injuries. Local unions are urged to record the OSHA 300A Health and Safety summaries posted by employers annually and to share the information with the National Union. Tracking this information will provide us with the information needed to assess patterns of hazards as well as identify new ones, such as the dangers associated with understaffing and contracting. This data can be useful in winning stronger language at the bargaining table and through state regulatory proceedings; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, UWUA members are encouraged to participate in local Workers' Memorial Day events. We will work for greater recognition of April 28th as a day to remember our lost sisters and brothers, and to rededicate ourselves to fight for the safety and health of our members and all workers.