



## Missing from the Headlines:

Elected officials and those they appoint continually make decisions that impact working people. Read on for recent actions on core USW issues that haven't always made – or lasted long – in the headlines.

*Note: lawsuits, advocacy efforts and other actions may change the following items, so this document will be updated regularly.*

## Workers' Rights

### 1 Eliminating a million workers' union rights.

On March 27, the president carried out the biggest union-busting action in our nation's history when he eliminated the bargaining rights of 75 percent of the federal workforce – that's nearly a million people.<sup>1</sup> This unprecedented overreach has implications that reverberate beyond the federal workforce, signaling that the administration is gearing up for a wider attack on collective bargaining.

### 2 Undermining the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

The NLRB safeguards our right to organize and collectively bargain, making decisions in cases involving disputes between workers and employers. During the president's first term, we saw a continual weakening of workers' rights at the hands of the NLRB and its general counsel, Peter Robb. That changed in 2021 as new appointees returned balance to the board.<sup>2,3,4</sup> We have again seen a sharp swing in the balance. While it is not uncommon to replace general counsels, the president also fired Gwynne Wilcox, a sitting board member. This has never occurred in the 90-year history of the agency. Wilcox filed a lawsuit that remains ongoing. With the board already short members, the loss of Wilcox means a lack of a quorum that has ground the work of the Board to a halt.<sup>5,6</sup>

### 3 Eliminating a key union dispute resolution tool.

The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) is a small but important federal agency that helps bring labor and management together when problems arise. Many USW contracts include utilizing FMCS when disputes occur. The administration is making drastic cuts to their mediators and other staff along with the closing of field offices, and pushing to end the agency entirely in the next federal budget. The result? Longer and drawn-out contract negotiations, delays in implementing new union contracts, and the likelihood of more strikes and lockouts.<sup>7,8</sup>

## Retirement Security & Healthcare

### 4 Threatening Social Security.

Over 11,000 Americans turn 65 each day. For the vast majority of Americans, Social Security will play a key role in making ends meet in retirement.<sup>9</sup> The administration fired 7,000 people from the agency's already understaffed workforce, exploding wait times, overwhelming call centers and jeopardizing Americans' ability to address benefit problems.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Politico, *Trump moves to strip unionization rights from most federal workers*, March 28, 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Bloomberg Law, *Biden Moves to Oust Top Labor Board Attorney Peter Robb*, January 20, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> In These Times, *Jennifer Abruzzo, the NLRB's General Counsel, Is Labor's Best Legal Friend*, September 27, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Economic Policy Institute, *The Biden Board: How President Biden's NLRB appointees are restoring and supporting workers' rights*, 2024.

<sup>5</sup> CBS News, *Trump has paralyzed agency that safeguards worker rights, labor experts and advocates say*, February 10, 2025.

<sup>6</sup> Associated Press, *Appeals court rules Trump can fire board members of independent labor agencies*, March 28, 2025.

<sup>7</sup> The Guardian, *Doge shuffles federal workplace mediator agency after Trump order*, March 26, 2025.

<sup>8</sup> Bloomberg Law, *Federal Mediation Services' Future Dim Despite Workers' Return*, July 2, 2025.

<sup>9</sup> Yahoo Finance, *How Many People are Retiring Every Year for the Next Four Years?*, April 24, 2024.

<sup>10</sup> Federal News Network, *How the DOGE-driven reductions at the Social Security Administration are playing out now*, July 28, 2025.

## 5 Gutting Medicaid.

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act used massive cuts to Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act and other safety net programs to partially offset steep tax breaks skewed to the wealthiest and corporations. These actions represent the largest rollback of federal support to healthcare in American history. Millions of Americans are expected to lose health insurance as a result. The AFL-CIO ran an analysis on the bill's outcomes and found that as hospitals and other care providers attempt to recoup costs of the growing number of uninsured, those with job-based insurance will likely see cost shifts to them – as high as \$485 extra a year per person.<sup>11</sup>

## 6 Sacrificing veterans' care.

While veterans are 6.1 percent of the U.S. population, they are 30 percent of the federal workforce, making them disproportionately impacted by the ongoing firings. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) enrolled 30 percent more people from March 2023-March 2024 compared to the year prior. At this time of growing needs, the administration announced in March that it would eliminate 80,000 jobs from the already-understaffed agency. Following vocal opposition from unions, veterans' groups and others, the goal was revised to 30,000 jobs. While lowered, critical concerns remain for the delivery of care at an already-understaffed agency.<sup>12</sup>

## 7 Harming critical medical research.

The National Institute of Health is the world's leading institution to conduct and fund medical research on enhancing health, lengthening life, and reducing illness and disability. In addition to the research done directly at NIH, through their grants, scientists across the country can conduct life-altering research. Over 1,200 people at NIH have already been fired, from lab managers to scientists to administrative staff, with more cuts expected. Meanwhile, the NIH has cut grants for critical research across the country, impacting future health outcomes and local economies. These actions are having a direct impact on USW members at the University of Pittsburgh, which is one of the largest recipients of NIH funding in the country.<sup>13, 14</sup>

# Workplace Safety & Health

## 8 Harming the agencies that support us on the job.

Workforce cuts along with office closures at OSHA, the Mine Safety and Health Administration, and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health will hinder our ability to properly address everything from workplace health and safety complaints to whistleblower protections, to workplace research into health hazard concerns. These agencies need more staffing, not less. For example, it would take OSHA 185 years for inspectors to visit every workplace just once BEFORE the cuts began.<sup>15</sup> Moving forward, the administration is proposing to eliminate government agencies like the Chemical Safety Board (CSB), which has played a key role in USW facilities when major chemical incidents and fatalities occur. They investigate, then the information is used to protect workers in the future. CSB-produced videos are used widely in USW represented workplaces.<sup>16</sup>

## 9 Endangering safety and health gains for USW members.

More than 5,000 workers in the U.S. are killed on the job each year – including roughly 30 fatalities annually in USW workplaces – while an additional 100,000 people die of occupational disease.<sup>17,18</sup> When laws to protect workers' health and safety become outdated, government agencies can – but don't always – add new scientific, economic or industry expertise to

<sup>11</sup> AFL-CIO, *Higher Costs and Less Care for Families with Job-Based Health Insurance*, June 17, 2025.

<sup>12</sup> Newsweek, *VA Announces Major Staff Changes: What to Know*, July 8, 2025.

<sup>13</sup> KDKA, *NIH funding uncertainty leaving Pitt researchers and graduate students worried*, March 3, 2025.

<sup>14</sup> Science Impacts (Multi-University Research Team), *Science & Community Impacts Mapping Project (SCiMaP)*, August 2025.

<sup>15</sup> Confined Space, *OSHA Update: All Quiet Now, But DOGE is Coming*, March 21, 2025.

<sup>16</sup> Chemical and Engineering News, *White House moves to kill chemical safety board, despite industry support*, July 17, 2025.

<sup>17</sup> USW Health, Safety and Environment Department, *International Executive Board Report*, March, 2025.

<sup>18</sup> AFL-CIO, *Death on the Job: The Toll of Neglect, 2024*, April 23, 2024.

update them through the rulemaking process, resulting in new standards (a.k.a. regulations or rules).

In recent years, our union celebrated new standards that will protect workers in mining from silica exposure, address unsafe staffing levels in long-term care facilities, expand rights for workers to choose who will represent them during safety investigations, and ban ongoing uses of asbestos to protect people from cancer.<sup>19,20,21,22,23</sup> In a win for USW members in oil refineries, chemical plants, and other workplaces utilizing significant volumes of chemicals, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) updated their enforcement manual for process safety management for the first time since 1994.<sup>24</sup> Other priorities were advancing in the rulemaking process, including a proposed rule on workplace heat exposure.<sup>25</sup>

Now those gains are at risk. The current administration issued an executive order on January 31, 2025, to deregulate government rule-making. It holds that “for each new regulation issued, at least 10 prior regulations be identified for elimination.”<sup>26</sup> Rules that aren’t final – like workplace heat exposure – are not expected to advance, and the implementation of others that are final – like those previously mentioned – may not be implemented on their timelines or simply not enforced as a way to derail them.

In July, the Department of Labor announced their intention to eliminate 60 worker protections from minimum wage for home care givers to mining safety rules to OSHA’s ability to address safety concerns when a specific regulation doesn’t exist for a hazard.<sup>27</sup>

## Trade and Job Security

### 10 Tracking unpredictable trade actions.

Our union aggressively utilizes our trade laws to protect our industries when they are threatened by bad actors around the globe. We have advocated for fair trade for decades and recognize its power to lift up workers’ rights and provide economic benefits if done responsibly. Our fight has been bipartisan, pushing presidents and lawmakers of both parties to take trade actions, including enacting tariffs; we successfully encouraged actions by both President Trump and President Biden in the past eight years.

However, we have met a moment of deep concern as the president has now begun to use tariffs to go after longstanding trading partners and friends like Canada. Per USW President Dave McCall, “Canada is not the problem. Indeed, Canada has taken steps to coordinate their trade policies with the U.S. to respond to unfair foreign trade, and applying across-the-board tariffs ultimately hurts workers on both sides of the border.”<sup>28</sup>

### 11 Derailing industrial policy.

Since at least the 1970s, our union has argued for a comprehensive strategy to support U.S. manufacturing. In the past few years, we were able to secure laws that encouraged domestic production, started rebuilding U.S. supply chains and helped industries invest for the future – all while supporting good, union jobs. Earlier this year, the Department of Energy cancelled funding for a number of USW employers’ projects, then the recent budget law further rolled back gains from the Inflation Reduction Act.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>19</sup> USW Press Release, *USW Applauds MSHA Update on Workplace Silica Standards*, April 16, 2024.

<sup>20</sup> Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, *Minimum Staffing Final Rule*, April 22, 2024.

<sup>21</sup> USW Blog, *Empowering the Caregivers*, September 14, 2023.

<sup>22</sup> USW Press Release, *USW Applauds Final OSHA Rule on Workplace Safety and Health Investigations*, March 29, 2024.

<sup>23</sup> Environmental Protection Agency, *Biden-Harris Administration finalizes ban on ongoing use of asbestos to protect people from cancer*, March 18, 2024.

<sup>24</sup> Bloomberg Law, *OSHA Issues Major Chemical Safety Enforcement Guide Changes*, January 29, 2024.

<sup>25</sup> USW Press Release, *USW Welcomes Life-Saving OSHA Heat Standard*, July 2, 2024.

<sup>26</sup> The White House, *Unleashing Prosperity through Deregulation*, January 31, 2025.

<sup>27</sup> Associated Press, *Trump’s Labor Department proposes more than 60 rule changes in a push to deregulate workplaces*, July 22, 2025.

<sup>28</sup> USW Press Release, *USW Opposes Canadian Tariffs, Welcomes Efforts to Contain Global Overcapacity*, February 10, 2025.

<sup>29</sup> Bloomberg News, *Trump Canceling \$3.7 Billion in Clean Energy Projects*, May 30, 2025.

## 12 Undermining efforts to protect workers globally.

The Department of Government Efficiency announced that the program funding for the Department of Labor's Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) would be eliminated. The ILAB team works to ensure products that come into our country are made free from child and forced labor. They monitor and enforce the implementation of our trade agreements, and help fight against trafficking, child labor and exploitative cheap labor. The elimination of both the grants the ILAB provides and possible staff positions undermines the interests of workers in the United States and around the world while benefitting multinational corporations looking for cheap labor. Funding and staffing for additional agency work that prevents this global race to the bottom has also been heavily impacted.<sup>30</sup>

## Economic Concerns

### 13 Giving more power to the wealthiest and their corporations.

Earlier this year, sources at the IRS reported they were drafting plans to cut roughly half of the 100,000 jobs within the agency. While the number has fluctuated, as of early summer, they had already reduced the workforce by 25% with more to come. Experts are concerned about the agency's future ability to crack down on wealthy Americans and corporations who are skirting federal tax laws given that they require more intensive manual work versus automated software reviews. Overall services – from getting questions answered to receiving timely returns – are expected to suffer.<sup>31</sup>

Meanwhile, consumer advocates are raising red flags about the administration's attempt to gut the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), which saves Americans more than \$15 billion every year by reining in bad actors on Wall Street and in Silicon Valley.<sup>32</sup> Russell Vought, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget as well as the co-author of Project 2025, is currently leading the bureau. Project 2025 called for the elimination of the CFPB.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> AFL-CIO Press Release, *AFL-CIO President Responds to DOGE Cuts at Department of Labor*, March 27, 2025.

<sup>31</sup> Kiplinger, *IRS Layoffs Spark Delays, Doubt This Tax Season*, March 26, 2025.

<sup>32</sup> ProPublica, *End for Yourself: Under Trump, Consumer Protection Bureau's Probes of Big Tech and Finance Firms Freeze Up*, March 26, 2025.

<sup>33</sup> Nerdwallet, *The CFPB Is Still Standing ... Barely. But Is It Doing Anything?*, August 5, 2025.