

**SAFE WORKPLACES, STRONGER
PARTNERSHIPS: THE FUTURE OF OSHA
COMPLIANCE ASSISTANCE**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WORKFORCE
PROTECTIONS
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND
WORKFORCE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION

HEARING HELD IN WASHINGTON, DC, JULY 16, 2025

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C O N T E N T S

Hearing held on July 16, 2025	Page 1
-------------------------------------	-----------

OPENING STATEMENTS

Mackenzie, Hon. Ryan, Chairman, Subcommittee on Workforce Protections	1
Prepared statement of	3
Omar, Hon. Ilhan, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Workforce Protections	5
Prepared statement of	12

WITNESSES

Williams, Chris, Executive Director, Voluntary Protection Programs Participants' Association	14
Prepared statement of	16
Harper, Myron, National Health and Safety Director, Cintas Corporation	20
Prepared statement of	21
Reindel, Rebecca L., Safety and Health Director, American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)	22
Prepared statement of	25
Sell, Kevin, Senior Manager Corporate Development, Kwest Group	44
Prepared statement of	46

ADDITIONAL SUBMISSIONS

Chairman Mackenzie:	
Letter dated July 16, 2025, from the National Retail Federation (NRF)	64
Ranking Member Omar:	
Statement for the Record from United Steelworkers (USW)	7

**SAFE WORKPLACES, STRONGER
PARTNERSHIPS: THE FUTURE OF OSHA
COMPLIANCE ASSISTANCE**

Wednesday, July 16, 2025

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WORKFORCE PROTECTIONS,
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:15 a.m., in Room 2175, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC, Hon. Ryan Mackenzie (Chairman of the Subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Mackenzie, Messmer, Grothman, Fine, Walberg, Omar, Stevens, Takano, and Scott.

Staff present: Vlad Cerga, Director of Information Technology; Libby Kearns, Press Assistant; Katerina Kerska, Legislative Assistant; Trey Kovacs, Director of Workforce Policy; Campbell Ladd, Clerk; R.J. Laukitis, Staff Director; Danny Marca, Director of Information Technology; Brad Mannion, Professional Staff Member; John Martin, Deputy Director of Workforce Policy/Counsel; Audra McGeorge, Communications Director; Alexis Morgan, Intern; Daniel Nadel, Legislative Assistant; Kevin O'Keefe, Professional Staff Member; Ethan Pann, Deputy Press Secretary and Digital Director; Kane Riddell, Staff Assistant; Carl Rifino, Intern; Sara Robertson, Press Secretary; Heidi Schneider, Professional Staff Member; Ambrose Tierney, Intern; Ali Watson, Director of Member Services; Joe Wheeler, Professional Staff Member; James Whittaker, General Counsel; Samantha Wright, Intern; Sayda Bir, Minority Intern; Ilana Brunner, Minority General Counsel; Alexandra Walker, Minority Intern; Dhrtvan Sherman, Minority Research Assistant; Bob Shull, Minority Senior Labor Policy Counsel; Raiyana Malone, Minority Press Secretary; Brian Marshall, Minority Legal Intern; Kevin McDermott, Minority Director of Labor Policy; Marie McGrew, Minority Press Assistant; Eleazer Padilla, Minority Staff Assistant; Véronique Pluviose, Minority Staff Director; Banyon Vassar, Minority Director of IT.

Chairman MACKENZIE. Good morning. This Subcommittee on Workforce Protections will come to order. I note that a quorum is present. Without objection, the Chair is authorized to call a recess at any time. Today's hearing will explore compliance assistance programs offered by OSHA, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and its State partners.

We will consider ways to strengthen these Federal programs and learn more about the public, private, safety partnerships that

OSHA's mission includes, with goals of protecting those who work hard every day to provide for their families and deserve to do so in safe working conditions.

Since its establishment in 1971, OSHA has developed enforcement efforts and robust compliance assistance programs. These programs help protect the millions of Americans who work hard every day to provide for their families, by giving employers the tools and guidance they need to prevent injuries and illness before they occur.

Instead of relying solely on inspections and investigations after a violation happens, compliance assistance programs encourage a proactive approach to safety, which is essential to any effective health and safety management system. Many of these programs have been in place for almost as long as OSHA itself.

For example, this year marks the 50th anniversary of OSHA's onsite consultation program, which provides no cost, confidential occupational safety and health services that are tailored for small and medium sized businesses. In 1982, OSHA approved the first site for its Voluntary Protection Programs, which recognized workplaces with safety and health practices that go above and beyond legal requirements.

In addition to OSHA's many Federal programs, there is a vast network of programs and initiatives conducted by states with their own OSHA approved State plans. As we look ahead, it is clear that workplaces are changing rapidly. New industries, emerging technologies, and evolving hazards require OSHA's compliance assistance programs to be more innovative, accessible, and adaptable than ever before.

Updating compliance assistance programs calls for a collaborative approach. Strong partnerships among State agencies, non-profit organizations, industry leaders, and other stakeholders will be vital. We will combine—we must combine enforcement efforts with educational opportunities for employers and workers who want to meet their compliance obligations if we are going to protect workers.

Importantly, certain Federal programs, such as the VPP are discretionary programs, meaning their effectiveness can change dramatically year over year, and employers engaged in these programs are under constant threat of losing this critical resource. We will hear more about a solution that addresses this concern, and codifies the program, allowing it to perform more consistently.

Today, we will also hear from individuals in their workplaces where these compliance assistance programs are used. The witnesses will offer their perspective on how these programs have made their workplaces safer, and they will make recommendations about how these programs can be improved to ensure worker health and safety.

I look forward to today's hearing, and today's witnesses, discussing strategies to make OSHA's compliance assistance programs more effective and responsive to the needs of the workforce. With that, I yield to the Ranking Member for her opening statement.

[The prepared statement of Chairman Mackenzie follows:]



Opening Statement of Rep. Ryan Mackenzie (R-PA), Chairman
Subcommittee on Workforce Protections
“Safe Workplaces, Stronger Partnerships: The Future of OSHA
Compliance Assistance”
July 16, 2025

(As prepared for delivery)

Today’s hearing will explore compliance assistance programs offered by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and its state partners. We will consider ways to strengthen these federal programs and learn more about the public-private safety partnerships that support OSHA’s mission—with the goal of protecting those who work hard every day to provide for their families and deserve to do so in safe conditions.

Since its establishment in 1971, OSHA has developed enforcement efforts and robust compliance assistance programs. These programs help protect the millions of Americans who work hard every day to provide for their families — by giving employers the tools and guidance they need to prevent injuries and illnesses before they occur. Instead of relying solely on inspections and investigations after a violation has happened, compliance assistance encourages a proactive approach to safety, which is essential to any effective health and safety management system.

Many of these programs have been in place for almost as long as OSHA itself. For example, this year marks the 50th anniversary of OSHA’s On-Site Consultation Program, which provides no-cost, confidential

occupational safety and health services that are tailored for small and medium-sized businesses. In 1982, OSHA approved the first site for its new Voluntary Protection Programs (VPP), which recognize workplaces with safety and health practices that go above and beyond legal requirements. In addition to OSHA's many federal programs, there is a vast network of programs and initiatives conducted by states with their own OSHA-approved state plans.

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I look forward to hearing from today's witnesses and discussing strategies to make OSHA's compliance assistance more effective and responsive to the needs of our workforce.

With that, I yield to the Ranking Member for an opening statement.

Ms. OMAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses for being here today. Over the last 6 months, the Trump administration has embarked on an aggressive assault on worker protections. Just in the past 2 weeks, Trump's Department of Labor has released five dozen deregulatory rulemakings, two thirds of which focus on health and safety issues.

These proposals target core worker protections, including changes to child labor rules, removing a requirement as basic and essential as having adequate lighting on construction sites, and even weakening workers' protection against asbestos. This spree of deregulation follows months of mass firing at the very agencies tasked with researching and investigating workplace conditions and a proposed budget that would reduce inspections and slash DOL's capacity to develop new safety standards.

The message is clear. Workers' rights and protections are under attack. Compliance assistance programs, such as the Voluntary Protection Program, have their place, but they are no substitute for clear standards that are actively and effectively enforced. No job should ever be a death sentence.

Workers deserve to come home to their families at the end of the day alive, healthy, and whole, yet according to the AFL-CIO, workplace hazards killed approximately 140,000 workers in 2023, including 5,283 workers from traumatic injuries and an estimated 135,000 from occupational diseases.

To protect workers from harm, Congress has passed landmark safety laws, and established important agencies like OSHA, MSHA, NIOSH, and the Chemical Safety and Hazards Investigation Board. When they are all allowed to do their jobs and are fully funded, these agencies save lives and prevent harm to workers.

Now, the Trump administration is attempting to strip away safety regulations and dismantle critical agencies like NIOSH and CSB. In doing so, they are threatening the lives of workers who rely on those safeguards and the resources these agencies provide.

In my own district, we are already feeling the consequences of these cuts. The University of Minnesota's Midwest Center for Occupational Health and Safety is one of just 18 NIOSH-funded Education and Research Centers in the Nation. It trains the next generation of workplace safety experts, who will help protect our workers in the high-risk industries. Without NIOSH, the invaluable research and workforce development provided by that center and others like it across the country will be lost.

That means fewer trained medical and safety professionals, less research capacity on critical issues, such as heat stress, and decreased investment in innovative technologies that can prevent illness and injury. The Trump administration's deregulatory agenda will result in more injuries, more deaths, more grieving families,

and less accountability for employers who put their workers in harm's way.

Committee Democrats are committed to honoring these workers who have been harmed or killed on the job, not just with words, but with action to change the system. Later today, Ranking Member Scott will reintroduce a bill that will finally bring workers the common-sense protection they deserve against heat-related injuries and illness.

I am proud to cosponsor the Asunción Valdivia Heat Illness, Injury, and Fatality Prevention Act, which requires OSHA to finally issue an enforceable rule with the strongest feasible protection against heat illness, including paid rest breaks, access to water, shaded or cooled recovery areas, and training that is delivered in the language and format the workers understand.

These are sensible safeguards that will save lives. Ranking Member Scott, Representative Courtney, and I also reintroduced the Protecting American Workers Act, which would make long overdue improvements to the enforcement of the Occupational Safety and Health Act. This bill would expand coverage to millions of workers currently excluded from the law's protections and strengthen whistleblower protections.

These reforms are critical to preventing the most serious violations that endanger worker safety. Democrats are offering real solutions to the problems workers face on the job instead of ripping away protections. I hope that our discussion today can center around ensuring that workers come home safely at the end of the day.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I request unanimous consent to enter into the record a statement from the United Steelworkers about the compliance assistance program we will be discussing today.

Chairman MACKENZIE. Without objection.

[The information of Ms. Omar follows:]



Statement for the Record

**The United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber,
Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and
Service Workers International Union (USW)**

for the

**U.S. House Committee on Education & Workforce's
Subcommittee on Workforce Protections**

hearing on

**"Safe Workplaces, Stronger Partnerships: The Future of
OSHA Compliance Assistance"**

July 16, 2025

Chair Mackenzie, Ranking Member Omar, and members of the U.S. House Committee on Education & Workforce's Subcommittee on Workforce Protections, on behalf of our 850,000 members, we want to thank you for holding this hearing on "Safe Workplaces, Stronger Partnerships: The Future of OSHA Compliance Assistance."

As the largest industrial union in North America, we understand all too well the dangers that our members face every day when they go to work. Many of our industries have inherently dangerous inputs and processes, which is why workplace health and safety is one of our union's top priorities. In fact, dating all the way back to our union's founding in 1942, one of our eight founding principles was "to secure by legislative enactment, laws protecting the limbs, lives, and health of our members." Since then, USW has been a leader in the advancement of policies supporting that value.

It is from this standpoint that we feel the need to weigh in on today's hearing. In particular, we wish to offer our opinion — based on firsthand experience across multiple sectors — of the Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) at the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). USW has several local unions and employers who participate in VPP in sectors including — but not limited to — chemical, petroleum refining, paper, metals, and rubber manufacturing plants. In the remainder of our statement, we plan to acknowledge the laudable stated goals of VPP, while also highlighting the numerous ways in which the program falls short of those goals.

Background on Voluntary Protection Program

Before jumping into the ways in which VPP falls short, it is only fair to take a moment to discuss the original goals of the program. Back in 1982, the Reagan administration established VPP as a means of recognizing companies that had a demonstrated commitment to safety and health. The idea was to streamline OSHA's duties by helping the agency pay less attention to the "good employers," and thus focus more of their energy on the worst actors.

However, from the beginning, this Reagan-era program has been plagued by the original inclusion of an inspection exemption. Essentially, the core of VPP is for employers to become exempt from OSHA inspections in exchange for meeting the programs criteria and passing recertifications every three to five years. As of 2024, there were 1,883 participants in VPP, down from a high-water mark of 2,436 in 2010.¹

The Program Currently Fails to Achieve Its Stated Goals

Like many other unions, our members have had mixed experiences with VPP. Some USW Locals like the program, crediting it with incentivizing their employers to

¹ [U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#), "Participant Information – VPP Statistics PPTX", Accessed July 15, 2025.

take health and safety more seriously. Others have found that achieving VPP status seems to have had little impact on the company's approach to workplace safety. Still others, most concerningly, have found that their employers actually use VPP as an opportunity to actively ignore their workers' concerns and to neglect hazard mitigation altogether.

This range of experiences underscores one of the fundamental flaws of VPP: when the criteria are so broad and the timelines for recertification are as long as they are (i.e., between three and five years), there is a lot of room for employer abuse of the program. We highlight this issue in the following examples:

- While conducting a safety investigation at a VPP Star facility, USW found "Lockout/Tagout Procedures" were missing the magnitude of the energy that a machine utilizes. When the USW's health and safety representative pointed out this missing information to management, the manager argued that the company did not need to change anything in the procedure because they are a VPP Star site.
- We represented an employer that was on OSHA's VPP list, but is now on OSHA's Severe Violator Enforcement Program (SVEP). The SVEP program is a list of employers where OSHA concentrates their resources on inspecting those that have demonstrated indifference to OSH Act obligations by committing willful, repeated, or failure-to-abate violations. The fact that an employer can be on OSHA's VPP list at one point, and then on the SVEP list the next shows that there is no such thing as an always "good" employer. Ownership and workplace culture can change, making the three to five year range for inspection exemption status dangerous.
- Finally, and most tragically, our union has experienced fatalities at VPP workplaces where employers did not provide the protections needed to save the lives of their workers. At one workplace, a young apprentice electrician was electrocuted while servicing a large air conditioner where the employer failed to have the proper procedures and training in place. We've also had a member die after he was engulfed in a flash fire involving combustible dust. Although OSHA correctly terminated VPP at this latter workplace, we believe that had these workplaces been involved in OSHA's programmed inspections, including its National Emphasis Program inspections, these fatalities could have been prevented.

Clearly, VPP employers' approaches to workplace health and safety (and thus, our union's experiences with the program) are wide-ranging. It is also worth pointing out that only 23 percent of VPP sites are unionized, with the other 77 percent being

non-union.² Given that research shows union workplaces are much more likely to publicly raise workplace safety concerns than their non-union peers³, it seems more than plausible that these negative experiences USW has had at our union facilities are just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the experiences of non-union workers at VPP sites.

A Path Forward

Despite these shortcomings, our union has long been willing to engage in conversations of how to improve our existing health and safety enforcement mechanisms. Rather than list all of our discrete programmatic reforms for VPP, we will instead highlight two thematic priorities. First, VPP must get rid of the programmed inspection exemption, and second, the program must ensure full worker participation, including their representatives. These two priorities must be the beginning, but not the end, of a conversation on how to improve VPP.

However, regardless of the future of VPP, it is worth saying that one cannot have a serious discussion about a future with “safer workplaces” without addressing the underfunding and understaffing at OSHA. According to the AFL-CIO’s latest *Death on the Job* report, OSHA’s 2025 budget was \$623 million, which was only 13 percent above its 2010 level.⁴ For context, inflation increased 48 percent over that same period⁵, meaning OSHA’s budget actually lost ground during that time. OSHA also lost roughly 9 percent of its inspectors during those 15 years. Given its current workforce, it is estimated that it would take OSHA 185 years to inspect every workplace once.⁶ Making matters worse, the President’s most-recent budget proposal called for an 8 percent cut in OSHA funding (down to \$582 million) and an additional 12 percent cut in the agency’s workforce.⁷ Such cuts would only amplify the challenges OSHA faces in enforcing workplace safety laws.

Obviously, this underfunding and understaffing at OSHA is preventing the agency from doing its job. While voluntary compliance programs like VPP might seem to be easy-fix solutions to this crisis, hopefully our comment here has shown how that is not the case. VPP is not making OSHA more efficient; it’s just rubber-stamping a system where OSHA can choose to ignore certain employers with mixed health and safety records. The only true way to ensure workers and workplaces are safe is to robustly fund OSHA and to provide the agency with an adequate number of staff. USW has long supported these goals, and will continue to do so in future appropriations cycles.

² Ibid.

³ [GW School of Public Health](#), “Unionized Nursing Homes 78% More Likely to Report Workplace Injury and Illness Data to OSHA”, September 5, 2023.

⁴ [AFL-CIO](#), “Death on the Job – The Toll of Neglect – 34th Edition”, April 2025.

⁵ [Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis](#), “About Us – Monetary Policy – Inflation Calculator”, Accessed July 15, 2025.

⁶ [AFL-CIO](#), “Death on the Job – The Toll of Neglect – 34th Edition”, April 2025.

⁷ [Confined Space](#), “Trump Budget to Workers: Drop Dead”, June 2, 2025.

Conclusion

In closing, VPP has its roots in an understandable idea, but has failed to achieve that idea in practice. In our ever-changing economy, where workers are constantly being exposed to new hazards, it is essential that employers, workers, and government come together to design a system that upholds the highest level of workplace health and safety standards. With too few requirements, too little oversight, and too broad of experiences, VPP is merely a bandage on a much bigger problem. We applaud the Committee for holding this important hearing, and we look forward to working together on a viable path forward: appropriately funding and staffing OSHA, which would actually result in safer workplaces and stronger partnerships between employers and their workers.

Ms. OMAR. Thank you, and I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Ranking Member Omar follows:]



OPENING STATEMENT

House Committee on Education and Workforce
Ranking Member Robert C. "Bobby" Scott

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Ilhan Omar (MN-05)

Subcommittee on Workforce Protections

"Safe Workplaces, Stronger Partnerships: The Future of OSHA Compliance Assistance"

Wednesday, July 16th, 2025 | 10:15 a.m.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

Over the last six months, the Trump Administration has embarked on an aggressive assault on worker protections.

And just in the past two weeks, Trump's Department of Labor has released five dozen deregulatory rulemakings – two-thirds of which focus on health and safety issues.

These proposals target core worker protections, including changes to child labor rules, removing a requirement as basic and essential as having adequate lighting on construction sites, and even weakening workers' protections against asbestos.

This spree of deregulation follows months of mass firing at the very agencies tasked with researching and investigating workplace conditions—and a proposed budget that would reduce inspections and slash DOL's capacity to develop new safety standards.

The message is clear: workers' rights and protections are under attack. Compliance assistance programs, such as the Voluntary Protection Program, have their place. But they are no substitute for clear standards that are actively and effectively enforced.

No job should ever be a death sentence. Workers deserve to come home to their families at the end of the day alive, healthy, and whole.

Yet, according to the AFL-CIO, workplace hazards killed approximately one hundred forty thousand workers in 2023, including 5,283 workers from traumatic injuries and an estimated 135,000 from occupational diseases.

To protect workers from harm, Congress passed landmark safety laws and established important agencies like OSHA, MSHA, NIOSH, and the Chemical Safety and Hazards Investigation Board.

When they are allowed to do their jobs and are fully funded, these agencies save lives and prevent harm to workers. But now, the Trump Administration is attempting to strip away safety regulations and dismantle critical agencies like NIOSH & the CSB.

In doing so, they are threatening the lives of workers who rely on those safeguards and the resources these agencies provide.

In my own district, we are already feeling the consequences of these cuts. The University of Minnesota's Midwest Center for Occupational Health and Safety is one of just 18 NIOSH-funded Education and Research Centers in the nation.

It trains the next generation of workplace safety experts who will help protect our workers in high-risk industries.

Without NIOSH, the invaluable research and workforce development provided by that Center—and others like it across the country—will be lost.

That means fewer trained medical and safety professionals, less research capacity on critical issues such as heat stress, and decreased investment in innovative technologies that can prevent illness and injury.

The Trump Administration's deregulatory agenda will result in more injuries, more deaths, more grieving families – and less accountability for employers who put their workers in harm's way.

Committee Democrats are committed to honoring those workers who have been harmed or killed on the job, not just with words, but with action to change the system.

Later today, Ranking Member Scott will reintroduce a bill that will finally bring workers the common-sense protections they deserve against heat-related injury and illness.

I am a proud cosponsor of the *Asunción Valdivia Heat Illness, Injury, and Fatality Prevention Act*, which requires OSHA to finally issue an enforceable rule with the strongest feasible protections against heat illness, including paid rest breaks, access to water, shaded or cooled recovery areas, and training that is delivered in a language and format that workers understand.

These are sensible safeguards that will save lives.

Ranking Member Scott, Representative Courtney, and I also reintroduced the *Protecting America's Workers Act*, which would make long-overdue improvements to the enforcement of the *Occupational Safety and Health Act*. This bill would expand coverage to millions of workers currently excluded from the law's protections and strengthen whistleblower protections.

These reforms are critical to preventing the most serious violations that endanger workers' safety.

Democrats are offering real solutions to the problems workers face on the job instead of ripping away protections.

I hope that our discussion today can center around ensuring that workers come home safely at the end of the day.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I request unanimous consent to enter into the record a statement from the United Steelworkers about the compliance assistance programs we will be discussing today.

Thank you, and I yield back.

Chairman MACKENZIE. Pursuant to Committee Rule 8(c), all members who wish to insert written statements into the record may do so by submitting them to the Committee Clerk electronically in Microsoft Word format by 5 p.m., 14 days after this hearing. Without objection, the hearing record will remain open for 14 days to allow such statements and other extraneous material noted during the hearing to be submitted for the official hearing record.

Now, to the introduction of our witnesses for today. Our first witness is Mr. Chris Williams, the Executive Director for the Voluntary Protection Programs Participants' Association in Falls Church, Virginia.

Our second witness is Mr. Myron Harper, the National Health and Safety Director for Cintas Corporation in Indianapolis, Indiana. Our third witness is Ms. Rebecca Reindel, the Safety and Health Director at the AFLCIO in Washington, DC. Our final witness is Mr. Kevin Sell, Senior Director for Corporate Development at Kwest Group in Alexandria, Kentucky. Mr. Sell is testifying on behalf of the Associated Builders and Contractors.

We want to thank all of our witnesses for being here today, and we look forward to hearing each of your testimony. Pursuant to Committee Rules, I will ask that each of you limit your oral testimony to a 3-minute summary of the written testimony that you have provided as Committee members have many questions to ask for you.

The clock will count down from 3 minutes. Pursuant to Committee Rule 8(d), the Committee practice, however, is that we will not cutoff your testimony until you reach the 5-minute mark. I would also like to remind the witnesses to be aware of their responsibility to provide accurate information to the Subcommittee, and with that I will recognize our first witness today, Mr. Williams. You are recognized for your testimony.

STATEMENT OF MR. CHRIS WILLIAMS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, VOLUNTARY PROTECTION PROGRAMS PARTICIPANTS' ASSOCIATION, FALLS CHURCH, VIRGINIA

Mr. WILLIAMS. Chairman Mackenzie, Chairman Walberg, Ranking Member Omar, and members of the Subcommittee, I thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of OSHA's compliance assistance programs.

My name is Chris Williams, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Voluntary Protection Programs Participants' Association. For 40 years, VPPPA has represented cites and companies involved in VPP.

Our more than 1,400 members represent every industry, and collectively represent nearly 300,000 workers, union and non-union. More than half of VPPPA's members occur at VPP cites, along with the nearly 1,900 sites across the country share in our mission to raise the standard for workplace health and safety excellence.

VPP is a program founded on collaboration. In 1979, the California Building Trades Council, a National Constructors Association and Cal/OSHA came together to develop the Cooperative Self Inspection Program. It was aimed at preventing injuries and illnesses during construction of the San Onofre Nuclear Power Plant. Led by labor, and with a full management buy-in, and oversight by Cal/OSHA, this resulted in levels of cooperation previously unseen and laid the foundation for the program that we see today.

OSHA's VPP has maintained this bedrock commitment to employee involvement, management commitment, and regulatory oversight, working together to foster a culture of continuous improvement. The proof is in the numbers. According to OSHA data, VPP sites maintain an average injury and illness rate 53 percent below BLS industry averages.

To put that in perspective, the average American workplace sees nearly three injured workers per 100 fulltime employees. For VPP sites, that number is closer to one, and that is the one too many

because VPP fosters a culture where safety is the core value on which every decision is made. It is why VPP works and saves.

VPP's impact goes beyond participants. It is felt across the more than 10 million workplaces in the United States through countless process innovations and best practices. It's felt by OSHA, through the Special Government Employee program, with VPP companies committing their own personal and resources to work alongside OSHA developing new ideas that are routinely adopted and improved.

Simply put, VPP is a shining example of what labor, management, and government can do when working together toward a shared vision of what can be, yet VPP remains a discretionary program, it can be eliminated at any time for any reason by any party. Make no mistake, it has been under threat before.

That is why we are pleased to see the introduction of H.R. 2844, the Michael Enzi Voluntary Protection Program Act. This bill's aim is simple, to make VPP a permanent program within OSHA, require that a percentage of OSHA's budget be set aside to fund VPP, and to create a pathway for every American workplace to reach VPP level performance.

VPP enjoys broad support, democrats and republicans, management and labor. In fact, VPP was built by labor, nearly 500 locals or signatories to VPP agreements, among them were the 380 AFL-CIO affiliated unions. VPP is the gold standard of safety and health management systems, and the only one available free to every workplace willing to commit to, and abide by, its stringent ongoing requirements.

Participants know that protecting workers is not proprietary. It is not a union or non-union issue. It is about sending our loved ones home in the same or better condition than which they arrived every day. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Williams follows:]

**Testimony to the United States House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Workforce Protections
“Safe Workplaces, Stronger Partnerships: The Future of
OSHA Compliance Assistance”
July 16, 2025
Chris Williams, CAE; Executive Director**



Chairman Mackenzie, Ranking Member Omar and Members of the Subcommittee, I thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of OSHA’s cooperative and compliance assistance programs, specifically the Voluntary Protection Program.

My name is Chris Williams, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Voluntary Protection Programs Participants’ Association. For forty years, VPPPA has represented sites and companies involved in the Voluntary Protection Programs administered by OSHA and the Department of Energy. VPPPA’s more than 1400 members represent every industry. Collectively, VPPPA members represent nearly 300,000 workers across America – both union and non-union. More than half of VPPPA’s members are current VPP Star, Mobile Workforce or Merit sites. All of our members, and the nearly 1,900 VPP sites across the country, share in our mission to raise the standard for workplace health and safety excellence.

VPP itself is a program created on the foundation of collaboration. In 1979, the California Building Trades Council, National Constructors Association and Cal/OSHA came together to develop the “Cooperative Self-Inspection Program” aimed at preventing injuries and illnesses during construction of the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station. This groundbreaking effort, led by labor and with full management buy-in and oversight by Cal/OSHA, resulted in levels of cooperation previously unseen and laid the groundwork for the program that we see today.

Since its “official” creation in 1982, OSHA’s VPP has maintained this bedrock commitment to employee involvement, management commitment and regulatory oversight to foster a culture of continuous improvement. All three cogs work together to produce a safer workplace.

The proof is in the numbers.

According to OSHA’s most recent data, VPP sites maintain an average injury and illness rate 53% below BLS industry averages¹. To put that in perspective, the average American workplace sees nearly 3 injured workers per 100 full time employees. For VPP sites, that number is closer to 1. Digging deeper, the average VPP site has a Days Away, Restricted or Transferred (DART) case rate 52% below BLS average². In layman’s terms, that means workers on a VPP site are half as likely to experience an injury or illness that necessitates time away from their jobs.

Yet, if you ask anybody on a VPP site, they’ll tell you that even 1 injury is too many. That culture where safety is THE core value upon which every decision is made, is why VPP works—and saves.

VPP’s impact isn’t limited to those sites and companies who participate, and believe, in the program. It’s felt across the more than 10 million workplaces in the United States through the countless process

¹ <https://www.osha.gov/vpp/evaluation2021>

² This information is calculated annually by the OSHA Office of Partnership and Recognition and is based upon the injury and illness data submitted every year by the VPP participants.

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innovations developed through VPP sites. It's felt by OSHA through the Special Government Employee program, with VPP companies committing their own personnel and resources to work alongside OSHA on certification and recertification audits, where new ideas are routinely adopted and developed.

Simply put—VPP is a shining example of what labor, management and government can do when working together toward a shared vision of what can be. Yet, VPP remains a discretionary program—it can be eliminated at any time, for any reason, by any party. And make no mistake—it's been under threat before.

That's why VPPPA was happy to see the introduction of H.R. 2844, the Michael Enzi Voluntary Protection Program Act. H.R.2844's aim is simple – to make VPP a permanent program within OSHA, and require that a percentage of OSHA's annual budget be set aside to fund VPP and create a pathway for every American workplace to reach VPP-level safety performance.

VPP enjoys broad support. Democrats and Republicans alike stand behind VPP. It's a program built on labor – nearly 500 local unions are signatories to VPP agreements. For example, more than 170 IBEW and 45 United Steelworkers locals support VPP as signatories. CEOs from the nation's biggest employers believe in the positive impact of VPP and commit substantial financial and personnel resources to participate in the program. VPP is the gold standard of safety and health management systems, and the only system available free to every workplace willing to commit to—and abide by—its stringent ongoing requirements.

VPP fosters a willingness to share because participants know that protecting workers isn't proprietary. It isn't a union or non-union issue. It's about sending our spouses, our children, our friends home in the same—or better—condition than which they arrived, every day.

That's why VPPPA supports H.R.2844—to ensure that OSHA's Voluntary Protection Program will continue to protect America's workers well into the future.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to your questions.

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Supplementary Information

**Voluntary Protection Programs
 Annual Evaluation of Calendar Year 2021 Injury and Illness Rates
 Source: <https://www.osha.gov/vpp/evaluation2021>**

The Voluntary Protection Programs (VPP) promote effective worksite-based safety and health. In the VPP, management, labor, and OSHA establish cooperative relationships at workplaces that have implemented a comprehensive safety and health management program. Participation in the VPP requires each VPP participant to evaluate annually the effectiveness of their safety and health management programs. The self-evaluation must include assessments of all the VPP elements and sub-elements of the VPP participant's safety and health management program.

By February 15th of each year, VPP participants must submit their annual self-evaluation to their Regional VPP Manager. The injury and illness rates from the VPP participant's annual self-evaluations are forwarded to the National Office where OSHA uses the information to update records and statistics, to showcase successes related to implementation of the VPP requirements, and to demonstrate that VPP participants are committed to continuously improving employee safety and health at their worksites.

Below is a summary of the findings from the calendar year 2021 annual evaluation of VPP participants' injury and illness rates.

Site-Based Non-Construction VPP Participants

During calendar year 2021, the VPP participants experienced the following results. On average, rates for site-based non-construction VPP participants are 53 percent below the Bureau of Labor and Statistics (BLS) Total Case Incident Rate (TCIR) and 57 percent below the BLS Days Away from Work, Restricted Work Activity, or Job Transfer (DART) rate for their respective industries. This data was collected from 1,232 Federal jurisdiction site-based non-construction VPP participants representing more than 349,000 employees.

Other results from the 2021 VPP Annual Evaluation:

- Site-based non-construction VPP participants avoided an estimated 4,035 TCIR injuries when compared to expected results within their respective industries.
- Site-based non-construction VPP participants avoided an estimated 3,262 DART injuries when compared to expected results within their respective industries.
- The 1,224 site-based non-construction VPP Star participants are, on average, 54 percent below the BLS TCIR and 57 percent below the BLS DART for their respective industries.
- The four site-based non-construction VPP Merit participants are, on average, 40 percent below the BLS TCIR and 47 percent below the BLS DART for their respective industries.
- The 88 Federal, site-based non-construction VPP participants are, on average, 58 percent below the BLS TCIR and 56 percent below the BLS DART for their respective industries.

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 Subcommittee on Workforce Protections
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- The 302 site-based non-construction VPP participants covered by the Process Safety Management (PSM) standard are, on average, 57 percent below the BLS TCIR and 59 percent below the BLS DART for their respective industries.
- There are 542 site-based non-construction VPP participants that experienced zero recordable injuries and illnesses during 2021.

Site-Based Construction and Mobile Workforce VPP Participants

During calendar year 2021, VPP participants experienced the following results. On average, site-based construction and mobile workforce VPP participants are 54 percent below the BLS TCIR rate and 72 percent below the BLS DART rate for their respective industries. This data was collected from 45 Federal jurisdiction site-based construction and mobile workforce VPP participants representing more than 21,000 employees.

Other results from the 2021 VPP Annual Evaluation:

- Site-based construction and mobile workforce VPP participants avoided an estimated 205 TCIR injuries when compared to expected results within their respective industries.
- Site-based construction and mobile workforce VPP participants avoided an estimated 163 DART injuries when compared to expected results within their respective industries.
- The 45 site-based construction and mobile workforce VPP Star participants are, on average, 54 percent below the BLS TCIR and 72 percent below the BLS DART for their respective industries.
- There were no site-based construction VPP Merit participants in calendar year 2021.
- The one site-based construction and mobile workforce VPP participant covered by the PSM standard is 100 percent below the BLS TCIR and 100 percent below the BLS DART for its respective industry.
- There are 14 site-based construction and mobile workforce VPP participants that experienced zero recordable injuries and illnesses during 2021.

Chairman MACKENZIE. Thank you, Mr. Williams. Next, we have Mr. Harper, and I recognize you for your testimony.

**STATEMENT OF MR. MYRON HARPER, NATIONAL HEALTH AND
SAFETY DIRECTOR, CINTAS CORPORATION, INDIANAPOLIS,
INDIANA**

Mr. HARPER. Good morning, Chairman Mackenzie and Ranking Member Omar, and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for holding this hearing, and for the opportunity to testify on the importance of the Voluntary Protection Program. My name is Myron Harper. I am a Director of Health and Safety for Cintas Corporation.

Cintas is dedicated to helping more than one million businesses of all types and sizes across the United States get ready to open their doors with confidence by providing a wide range of products. Cintas employs approximately 47,000 employee partners in our workforce today, and our overarching goal is to ensure everyone returns home safely at the end of the day.

We accomplish this through our Cintas Health and Safety Management System, which is modeled after our OSHA Voluntary Protection Program. Since the certification of our first site in 2010, 139 additional Cintas facilities nationwide have achieved VPP Star certification.

Achieving VPP Star certification is a rigorous process. Our locations must show that all employee partners work together to prevent workplace injuries and incidents. I also serve as a special government employee through OSHA's Voluntary Protection Program. As a special government employee, I had the opportunity to engage with peers through multiple educational opportunities, mentoring, and by participating in onsite evaluations.

Even though OSHA works together with sites to find solutions and give feedback, we are held to an even higher standard and are still subject to audits and evaluations post-certification, and this remains critical to the success of this program today.

I would like to thank Congresswoman Diana Harshbarger and Congressman Mike Thompson, the bipartisan cosponsors of H.R. 2844, the Michael Enzi Voluntary Protection Program Act. Passage of this legislation would ensure the long-term success of this great program in keeping all employees engaged, healthy, and safe.

Thank you again to the Subcommittee for the opportunity to testify. I will look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Harper follows:]

**Written Testimony of Myron Harper
Health & Safety Director
Cintas Corporation
House Education & Workforce Committee
Workforce Protections Subcommittee
Safe Workplaces, Stronger Partnerships: The Future of OSHA Compliance Assistance
July 16, 2025**

Good morning, Chairman Mackenzie, Ranking Member Omar and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to testify on the importance of the Voluntary Protection Program. My name is Myron Harper, and I am Director of Health & Safety for Cintas Corporation.

Cintas is dedicated to helping more than one million businesses of all types and sizes get ready to open their doors with confidence by providing a wide range of products, including uniforms, mats, mops, restroom supplies, first aid and safety products, fire protection services, and safety training.

Cintas' operations and facilities touch almost every corner of the United States, and our employee-partners are a driving force behind our shared accomplishments. Cintas employs approximately 47,000 employee-partners in our workforce today and our overarching goal is to ensure everyone returns home safely at the end of the day.

With over twenty years at Cintas, I have held various roles in operations and safety, focusing on collaborative efforts that involve multiple teams and committees. Our initiatives aim to educate and engage our partners, enhance our safety systems, and ultimately reduce or eliminate workplace injuries.

I would like to take a moment to discuss our health and safety management system and the pivotal role that the Voluntary Protection Program plays in our success.

A foundational element of our corporate culture is genuine care for our partners, customers, vendors and contractors. This drives our health and safety vision and affirms our commitment to promoting a healthier and safer workplace every day.

We accomplish this through the Cintas Health & Safety Management System, modeled after the OSHA Voluntary Protection Program. This program is widely recognized as a standard for health and safety excellence, addressed through four primary elements:

- Management Leadership and Employee Involvement,
- Worksite Analysis,
- Hazard Prevention and Control,
- and Safety and Health Training

Cintas proudly upholds its commitment to OSHA's VPP Star Program, setting a new standard for U.S. businesses and serving as a crucial part in maintaining healthy and safe work environments. Since the certification of our first site in 2010, an impressive 139 additional Cintas facilities nationwide have achieved VPP Star certification.

I have been fortunate to have personally led several Cintas locations to achieve VPP status. As members of this Subcommittee are aware, achieving VPP Star certification is a rigorous process. Our locations must show that all partners work together proactively to prevent workplace incidents. This is accomplished by implementing a comprehensive health and safety management system and maintaining injury and illness rates below the national industry averages reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

As with many successful programs, the key to success is rarely found within one's own walls. In fact, a critical component of this program's success is the outreach to other sites and the role OSHA plays as a partner.

In this vein, I also serve as a director-at-large on the National and Region-V Voluntary Protection Program Participants Association (VPPPA) respective Boards, and I am a certified Special Government Employee (SGE) through OSHA's Voluntary Protection Program. As an SGE, I have the opportunity to engage with peers through multiple educational opportunities, active mentoring, and by participating in onsite evaluations.

Our relationship with OSHA is also an integral part of the VPP program and our ongoing goal to ensure every location is free from injury, illness, collision and fire. Even though OSHA works together with sites to find solutions and give feedback, we are held to an even higher standard and are still subject to audits and evaluations post-certification. This has held true dating back to our first location being certified more than 15 years ago and remains critical to the success of the program today. In short, collaboration is key, but when needed, enforcement remains an essential tool for OSHA.

I would like to publicly thank Congresswoman Diana Harshbarger and Congressman Mike Thompson, the bipartisan cosponsors of H.R. 2844, the Michael Enzi Voluntary Protection Program Act. Passage of this legislation would ensure the long-term success and stability of this program, and I'm hopeful this Committee and Congress will advance this legislation during the 119th Congress.

Thank you again to the Subcommittee for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to any questions you have at the appropriate time.

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Chairman MACKENZIE. Thank you. Next I will recognize Ms. Reindel for your testimony.

**STATEMENT OF MS. REBECCA L. REINDEL, SAFETY AND
HEALTH DIRECTOR, AFL-CIO, WASHINGTON, D.C.**

Ms. REINDEL. Good morning, Chairman Mackenzie, Ranking Member Omar, and members of the Subcommittee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the AFL-CIO about protecting worker health and safety.

I want to start by saying that the magnitude of work-related fatalities, injuries, and illnesses is enormous for American workers, and it's totally unacceptable in this country. Each year in the U.S., more than 5,000 workers die on the job from traumatic injury, and an estimated 135,000 die each year from work related disease.

The families of these workers suffer the consequences, and these are devastating, and they are preventable. What we are talking about today are not just numbers and goals and achievements, they are people's lives.

The job safety enforcement agency for most work places, OSHA, has been starved by budget cuts and hampered by staffing reduction, and low penalty structures that keep it from carrying out its core responsibilities entrusted to it by Congress, even before the

Trump administration's recent efforts that will reduce these resources even more.

Between 1991 and 2024, OSHA's budget decreased 8 percent. In the last 35 years we have seen a 19 percent reduction in all of OSHA's staff, including at headquarters, and with a whopping 35 percent decrease in enforcement staff alone. Meanwhile, employment has grown 43 percent and workplaces have grown 82 percent.

Overall, this is a 38 percent reduction in the amount the agency has to protect each worker it is responsible for. Now only \$3.92 for each worker.

We do a calculation each year in our report on the number of years it would take OSHA to inspect each workplace and its jurisdiction once, based on its resources. Since 1991, that number has gone from once every 84 years to once every 185 years. Under the President's budget proposal for fiscal 1926, that number would be the worst on record, once every 266 years. They have proposed to reduce the number of OSHA inspections by nearly 30 percent.

Meanwhile, 8 million public sector workers have no OSHA coverage, a number that has increased 10 percent in the last 35 years.

All of this means that the budget appropriated by Congress is not enough for the agency to carry out even its core responsibilities of setting standards and enforcing them. A quick reminder, the two duties in the OSH Act are for employers that must, one, maintain a workplace free from recognized hazards and, two, comply with the standards promulgated by the agency. Recent firings of the health and safety agency staff, like at NIOSH, and new policies by the Trump administration will only make things worse for America's workers.

Right before the Fourth of July, the administration just proposed to rescind and weaken dozens of worker health and safety rules, including removing training and medical evaluation requirements for PPE to function properly, removing employer requirements on reporting illnesses, and removing OSHA's general duty to keep workers safe.

Meanwhile, OSHA has not been able to issue many standards in recent years, and when they do it can take up to 20 years to get one out the door.

Compliance assistance has always been part of the OSHA model, but compliance assistance is just that, assistance to aid employers with understanding and complying with the law. OSHA has many compliance assistance programs. Examples are resources for businesses to better understand the standards they need to follow, guidance on specific hazards and ways to correct them, and recommendations on systemic issues to keep those hazards corrected. Lower penalties, just like inspection exemptions, incentives to under report injuries, and a lack of meaningful worker and union participation, all undermine the credibility of any voluntary program.

Resources are not distributed evenly. For years OSHA has consistently spent more than ten times the amount of money on employer compliance assistance than it has on worker safety and health training. Now, the President has proposed to zero out worker health and safety training altogether in OSHA's budget. OSHA's few resources are not a reason to spend more money on the vol-

untary approaches. Compliance assistance is an important part of the OSHA model, but only as an aid to support the mandate the agency was given by Congress, not a replacement for it.

Thank you for inviting me to testify, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Reindel follows:]

Testimony of Rebecca L. Reindel, MS, MPH
Safety and Health Director
American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)

Before the House Committee on Education and the Workforce
Subcommittee on Workforce Protections
U.S. House of Representatives

“Safe Workplaces, Stronger Partnerships: The Future of OSHA Compliance Assistance”
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Chairman Mackenzie, Ranking Member Omar and members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the AFL-CIO about protecting worker health and safety.

The AFL-CIO is the federation of 63 national labor unions in the U.S., representing 15 million working people across a wide variety of industries—including construction, education, emergency response, manufacturing, health care, transportation, utilities, retail and service, entertainment, athletics, and others—in private and public sectors and in stationary and mobile workplaces. Our members and millions of other workers across the country face life-altering working conditions every day they show up to work.

The magnitude of work-related fatalities, injuries and chronic disease is enormous for American workers and totally unacceptable.

Each year in the United States of America, more than 5,000 workers die on the job from traumatic injury and an estimated 135,000 die each year from work-related chronic illness.¹ According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the job fatality rate is higher for Hispanic or Latino workers and for Black workers than for other workers.²

Annually, 3.2 million workers report nonfatal job injuries; but these injuries are only about one-third of the real problem.³ Many workers fear reporting injuries to their employers because of systemic retaliatory practices, and reporting by states to the federal government is voluntary.⁴ Workers face

¹ Takala J., Hämäläinen P., Sauni R., Nygård C.H., Gagliardi D., and S. Neupane. “Global-, regional- and country-level estimates of the work-related burden of diseases and accidents in 2019.” *Scand J Work Environ Health*. 2024 Mar 1;50(2):73–82. Available at pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10927068/#suppl.

² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries. [BLS.gov/iif/overview/cfoi.htm](https://bls.gov/iif/overview/cfoi.htm).

³ AFL-CIO. *Death on the Job: The Toll of Neglect*. April 23, 2025. [AFLCIO.org/reports/dotj-2025](https://aflcio.org/reports/dotj-2025).

⁴ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses. [BLS.gov/respondents/iif/](https://bls.gov/respondents/iif/).

significant fear of retaliation for speaking up about hazards, compounding the ability for dangerous working conditions to be addressed.

Meanwhile, 8 million public sector workers have no OSHA coverage at all, a number that has increased 10% in the last 35 years. (See Table 1 below.) And OSHA penalties often are too weak to deter employers.

Workplace fatalities and serious injuries and disease are preventable when employers follow commonsense job safety and health rules. Strong and targeted enforcement by OSHA not only saves lives but also saves valuable resources for employers. Addressing workplace safety and health is not a one-and-done issue. It is constant work involving assessment, planning, evaluation and investment into fixing the problems, not Band-Aid approaches.

OSHA's Existing Resources

First and foremost, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is responsible for setting health and safety standards and enforcing those standards to ensure employers are following the law and reducing workers' risk of injury, illness and work-related death. Enforcement is a cornerstone of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 (OSH Act) and has always been a major part of the OSHA program. This is not just an authority of OSHA, but a requirement.

OSHA's ability to provide protection to workers has greatly diminished over the years due to severe reductions in its resources. The AFL-CIO's annual report titled "Death on the Job: the Toll of Neglect," captures and measures the ability of OSHA to do its job to protect American workers' lives, limbs and lungs. Our most recent report, published in April 2025, demonstrates the starvation of our nation's job safety and health enforcement agency. There is an enormous disparity between OSHA's assigned responsibilities and its resources to implement them.

OSHA only receives \$632 million to protect 161 million workers across 11.8 million workplaces in the United States.⁵ Meanwhile, other federal agencies can have more than 30 times the budget of OSHA. OSHA's budget is the same today as it was in FY 2023; and OSHA's budget has seen an effective decrease since our first report issued in 1992, due to inadequate funding from Congress to keep up with inflation. OSHA's budget has seen a 7% decrease since 1991, while employment has increased 43% and the number of workplace establishments has increased 82% in the same timeframe.⁶ (See Table 1 below.)

In other words, OSHA has learned to be extremely efficient over the years—and more than 712,000 workers now can say their lives have been saved since the passage of the OSH Act.⁷

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ AFL-CIO. *Death on the Job: The Toll of Neglect*. April 23, 2025. [AFL-CIO.org/reports/dotj-2025](https://aflcio.org/reports/dotj-2025).

⁷ Ibid.

OSHA's resources are paltry, yet we know OSHA enforcement works. A substantial body of empirical evidence, including studies conducted by the Rand Corporation and by the business schools of Harvard University and the University of California at Berkeley, confirm that OSHA inspections result in substantially and persistently reduced rates of both injuries and insurance costs to the tune of billions of dollars annually for employers, both large and small.^{8,9,10}

Evaluation of individual OSHA standards have shown similar conclusions: OSHA's rule to prevent worker deaths in trenching and excavation work has reduced workplace deaths by more than 40%; its standard for handling bloodborne pathogens has virtually eliminated occupationally acquired hepatitis B fatalities that killed 120 workers every year; and its grain-handling standard led to a 70% decrease in fatalities. These evaluations are clear that OSHA standards and enforcement reduces injuries and illnesses, and is the most effective means OSHA has to save lives.¹¹

⁸ Haviland AM, Burns RM, Gray WB, Ruder T, Mendeloff J. 2010. "What kinds of injuries do OSHA inspections prevent?" *J Saf Res* 14:339–345. doi.org/10.1016/j.jsr.2010.03.005.

⁹ Levine DI, Toffel MW. 2012. "Government regulation that actually works." Harvard Business Review blog. blogs.hbr.org/cs/2012/05/government_regulation_that_act.html.

¹⁰ Levine DI, Toffel MW, Johnson MS. 2012. "Randomized government safety inspections reduce worker injuries with no detectable job loss." *Science* 336(6083):907–911. doi.org/10.1126/science.1215191.

¹¹ See [OSHA.gov/dea/lookback.html](https://www.osha-slc.gov/dea/lookback.html).

Table 1. United States Workplace Health and Safety Coverage and Resources

	1991*	2024*	% Change
OSHA Budget, FY 2025	\$683.5M (inflation adjusted) \$296.5M in 1991	\$632.3M	-7.5%
Amount OSHA has to protect the health and safety of each worker it is responsible for	\$6.36 (inflation adjusted) \$2.76 in 1991	\$3.92	-38%
OSHA Coverage			
Annual average employment (2023)	107,321,596	153,140,899	+43%
Annual establishments (2023)	6,517,561	11,866,306	+82%
Public sector workers not covered	7.3 million	8 million	+10%
# OSHA FTE	2,421	1,962	-19%
# Establishments per FTE**	2,692	6,585	+145%
# OSHA inspectors (federal and state)	1,953	1,802	-7.7%
Inspector per workers	1 : 54,952	1 : 84,937	-35%
Number of federal OSHA inspectors per million workers	9.7	6.1	-40%
Number of Years It Would Take Federal OSHA to Inspect Every Workplace Once	84	185	+120%

*Source: AFL-CIO Annual Death on the Job Reports: First-ever 1992, most recent 2025.

**FTE = Full Time Equivalent

At the same time, the Trump administration has proposed an alarming FY 2026 job safety budget that would cut 80% of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH, reduction of \$290M), 8% of OSHA (\$49.9M, 223 FTEs) and 10% of the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA, reduction of \$39.6M, 47 FTEs), and eliminate the Chemical Safety Board (CSB) and Susan Harwood grants for organizations to train workers on health and safety. Additional cuts (reduction of \$25M, and 153 FTEs) were proposed to DOL's Wage and Hour Division, which sets child labor rules and enforces them—an important factor in keeping workplaces safe.

The number of OSHA inspections the Department of Labor stated it can justify with the proposed FY 2026 budget is 27% lower than recent years and results in a near-record low of the number of OSHA inspections that can be conducted to protect American workers and correct industry behavior. The Department of Labor stated that “OSHA will work to support sustained growth in domestic production and manufacturing,” but this will be at the expense of worker safety and will lead to more workers getting injured, ill and killed from preventable workplace hazards.

Table 2. Federal OSHA Inspection Targets, FY 26 Budget Request¹²

	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
# Safety Inspections	27,477	27,391	19,943
# Health Inspections	6,869	6,983	4,986
Total	34,346	34,374	24,929

In FY 2024, OSHA conducted 28,222 safety inspections and 6,460 health inspections, totaling 34,682 inspections, which means OSHA was only able to reach every workplace in its jurisdiction once every 185 years.¹³ As shown in Table 1 above, this metric was 84 “years to inspect” when the AFL-CIO first issued its report in 1992. If OSHA only conducts 25,000 inspections in FY 2026, this figure will soar to 266 “years to inspect”—by far the worst ever on record, and even worse than OSHA’s inspection record during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Last year, there was serious concern that the number of OSHA inspections still had not reached pre-pandemic levels but now, under budget proposals, there is deeper concern that a severe number of employers will go unchecked and workers' lives will be the price this country pays.

With the current rapid acceleration of technologies, robotics and artificial intelligence being deployed in workplaces, OSHA needs *more* resources for oversight, not fewer. With the growth of employment over the last several decades, OSHA needs *more* resources for oversight, not fewer.

¹² U.S. Department of Labor. FY 2026 Annual Performance Plan. [DOL.gov/sites/dolgov/files/general/budget/2026/CBJ-2026-V1-01.pdf](https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/general/budget/2026/CBJ-2026-V1-01.pdf).

¹³ AFL-CIO. *Death on the Job: The Toll of Neglect*. April 23, 2025. [AFLCIO.org/reports/dotj-2025](https://aflcio.org/reports/dotj-2025).

These numbers are not a game; these cuts directly impact people's lives. American workers have been left behind. They are being forced into an impossible choice—that between their lives and their livelihoods.

The Trump Administration's Continued Assault on Worker Health and Safety Protections

The worker health and safety crisis of our nation is alarming.

Instead of dedicating more resources to protecting our nation's workers, the Trump administration is rolling back worker health and safety resources and protections. NIOSH is the only agency with the responsibility to conduct occupational health and safety research that benefits workers, employers and other federal and state agencies. But the president, at the urging of the so-called "Department of Government Efficiency" or DOGE, fired two-thirds of federal workers at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the nation's only occupational health and safety research agency, benefiting workers and employers.

The decimation of NIOSH divisions and programs will eliminate the only programs in our nation that:

- Research—in the laboratory and in workplaces—the science of job hazards that kill, maim and disease workers every day.
- Research real-world application and adoption of mitigation measures in the workplace.
- Apply lifesaving interventions with workers and employers in dangerous industries.
- Conduct nonpunitive, fact-finding investigations to prevent future incidents.
- Collect and manage surveillance data on job injuries, illnesses and fatalities.
- Approve all respirators for compliance with safety and health standards and remove counterfeit respirators from the U.S. marketplace.
- Update recommended chemical exposure limits that threaten workers' lives.
- Provide for the administration of medical care and process compensation claims for workers who have been made ill when responding to 9/11 and the Cold War.
- Develop unique, expert guidance specific to occupational health and safety that local health authorities, employers, unions and workers rely on.
- Train our nation's next generation of occupational health and safety experts.

Without all of these staff in all of these divisions, the agency will effectively shut down. While some of these staff have been returned, significant programs and divisions still remain terminated or defunct, and others who have been returned were not included in the president's FY 2026 budget request. The damage is severe and will lead to an increase in preventable job injuries, illnesses and fatalities. The cuts at NIOSH alone will harm generations of workers to come.

Further, the administration has pushed out at least 10% of OSHA employees who write standards, monitor field enforcement activities and data collected from employers, intake worker complaints, oversee state OSHA programs—all duties required by the OSH Act—and more. It plans to eliminate a dozen OSHA and MSHA field offices this summer, where inspectors are based. It paused coal mine

enforcement of the MSHA silica rule just days before it was to go into effect. The administration also halted federal advisory committees of experts to help guide the agency on addressing workplace health and safety issues.

Taking away hard-won worker protections, deemphasizing job safety enforcement and slashing job safety agency budgets will all cost workers their lives. The chaos and confusion continue, while working people are left behind.

New Deregulatory Efforts Remove Core Worker Safety and Health Protections

Two weeks ago, the Trump administration launched a direct assault on worker protections that will prevent workers from going home to their families at the end of their shifts.

Under the guise of “duplicative” requirements, which are not duplicative at all, the administration published at least 35 proposals to take job safety and health regulations off the books, and at least 20 others to go after wage, benefit and other worker protections. Additionally, proposals are expected soon to allow children to work in hazardous occupations, which has been outlawed for decades.

On worker health and safety protections, the Trump administration is proposing to:

- Remove OSHA’s general duty to keep workers safe on the job if they are working in “inherently risky” occupations like the entertainment industry.
- Remove employer requirements to report certain job illnesses to OSHA.
- Remove the right for government safety and health managers to require employers to improve their safety and health programs to protect miners.
- Remove workers’ rights to be medically evaluated and accommodated when being required to wear a respirator at work.
- Remove workers’ rights to information when working with asbestos, lead and other dangerous compounds.
- Remove safety requirements to provide adequate lighting and hazard alert color schemes in workplaces.
- Remove inspection and maintenance requirements for certain equipment.

Couple all of this with legislative attempts to disable and add duplicative and unnecessary requirements to the regulatory system, which would make it impossible for agencies like OSHA and MSHA to issue new protections that save workers’ lives.

Already, *each* OSHA standard—lifesaving worker protections—averages well more than seven years for any administration to develop, given the overly burdensome requirements placed on the agency over the years by the legislative, judicial and executive branches.¹⁴ In recent years, OSHA has taken 20 years to issue standards like silica and beryllium, and the bulk of OSHA standard setting actually occurred in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, rather than recently. (See attached charts.)

¹⁴ U.S. Government Accountability Office. “Workplace Safety and Health: Multiple Challenges Lengthen OSHA’s Standard Setting.” GAO-12-330. April 2, 2012. [GAO.gov/products/gao-12-330](https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-12-330).

The stark reality is that this nation's regulatory system has been critically overburdened with massive obstacles that worker protection agencies must surmount to propose even the most basic of protections for workers. Most proposed attempts to change the regulatory system actually weaken the ability of agencies to issue future standards against workplace hazards.

Updates to the regulatory system should speed up the process so that OSHA and other agencies can issue safeguards to protect workers and the public as the authors of the OSH Act intended, as well as increase transparency and remove special privileges given to businesses over workers. Protecting workers should be the goal of safety and health regulations, and protecting workers is good for employers.

Instead, DOGE is attempting to strip away safety and health protections—those that keep people alive and prevent workers from developing lifelong illness from the job. This effort to roll back and weaken worker safety and health protections for people who want to return home to their families after every shift should be unacceptable to every elected leader.

Compliance Assistance and Voluntary Programs

For years, OSHA consistently has spent more than 10 times the amount of money on employer compliance assistance than it has on worker training. (See attached charts.) Compliance assistance accounts for a significant amount of OSHA's budget at \$140 million, where small businesses benefit from onsite consultation—which is confidential and free—and compliance assistance specialists who help businesses identify problems and address them. OSHA compliance assistance should continue to focus on small businesses and on industries with workers especially vulnerable to serious hazards and workplace fatalities, injuries and illnesses.

Voluntary programs have always been part of OSHA's compliance assistance model. The major voluntary programs run by OSHA are the Voluntary Protection Program (VPP), a program that recognizes companies with good safety and health management systems, and the Alliance program, under which OSHA partners with trade associations, professional groups and others to carry out safety and health initiatives targeted at particular industries or hazards. Alliances can be made at the national, regional or state level, with more than 1,000 alliances having been created. Currently, OSHA has 39 national and many more regional/area alliances.¹⁵

Voluntary Protection Program

OSHA's VPP was initiated in 1982 during the Reagan administration to recognize and certify companies with a low reported injury and illness rate who implemented safety and health programs. A voluntary recognition program has theoretical benefits where employers put together safety and health management systems and checklists that go beyond OSHA requirements, still make a profit and are recognized for it. However, actual execution of the program can play out very differently and significant structural problems remain.

¹⁵ See [OSHA.gov/alliances](https://www.osha-slc.gov/alliances).

First, companies that qualify for VPP are exempt from regularly scheduled OSHA inspections, even if serious hazards may still exist. When the program was initiated, the AFL-CIO opposed this exemption—and still opposes it. An inspection exemption does not incentivize employers to make conditions safer, but does attract companies to the program. Inspection exemptions also limit OSHA's discretion as to what kind of oversight is needed— especially in workplaces that fall into high hazard industry sectors that are the subject of OSHA emphasis programs. Plus, employers who are doing the best work do not need inspection exemptions.

Second, the assumption that VPP-approved workplaces are model workplaces is often misleading. There are VPP sites with evidence of programmatic failure, as serious hazards still exist and serious injuries and fatalities still occur after VPP has awarded sites recognition. Companies can remain in VPP even where they have citations for fatalities and willful violations. OSHA has allowed the same companies to be part of VPP and the Severe Violators Enforcement Program—a hot list for companies that severely misbehave, have fatalities and willful violations—at the same time.

Examining VPP's efficacy, The Center for Public Integrity found that between 2000 and 2010, 80 workers were killed on the job at OSHA VPP sites.¹⁶ In 2018, a worker was killed after falling into a water basin of a cooling tower at a VPP-approved refinery.¹⁷ Another tragic example is a combustible dust fatality at one of our union VPP companies, even though a VPP company should have a gold standard combustible dust program, regardless of OSHA not having a standard. These deaths are devastating to family members, and where they are preventable they undermine the credibility of the program overall.

Third, lack of oversight and accountability is built into the VPP model. It allows companies to self-police their safety programs. Employers can check boxes rather than adequately address safety concerns. Self-regulation produces working environments in which violations can occur and remain unnoticed, allowing unsafe practices and conditions to persist, and where employers can become complacent about the ongoing assessments and changes needed to maintain safe work environments. This approach allows health and safety to be utilized as a public relations tool rather than make genuine commitments and policy changes to safety, thus creating the illusion of safety, which may or may not exist.

In addition to government oversight of a government-funded program, unions are a key accountability partner where there is true participation of workers and their representatives. Yet, 90% of workplaces in the United States are not unionized. Without OSHA oversight, and without a union to hold a voluntary program accountable, we only have the word of most employers in the program.

¹⁶ Hamby, Chris. (2011, July 7). *'Model workplaces' not always so safe*. The Center for Public Integrity. Available at: PublicIntegrity.org/inequality-poverty-opportunity/workers-rights/worker-health-and-safety/model-workplaces/model-workplaces-not-always-so-safe/.

¹⁷ LaRose, Greg. (2018, July 7). *Contract worker dies at Belle Chasse Refinery*. NOLA. Available at: NOLA.com/news/traffic/contract-worker-dies-at-belle-chasse-refinery/article_d01c05db-75aa-554f-acdc-69907062341c.html.

Instead, VPP encourages a management-driven, top-down approach, rather than encouraging workers to empower themselves to communicate about unsafe conditions. With fewer OSHA inspections at VPP sites, workers have limited opportunities to address safety concerns with an external body.

Fourth, we do not actually know that the VPP certification systematically reduces injuries, illnesses or fatalities, and the program's evaluation metrics are unclear. The program incentivizes employers to use programs that we do not know work. Further, it is likely that the companies that implement programs would do so without VPP. Employers allowed in the program have lower injury rates *than the national average*, which does not mean they have *low* injury rates. Additionally, underreporting of workplace injuries is pervasive because too many workers fear retaliation or succumb to pressure from their company to stay in VPP.

Since its inception, VPP has never been comprehensively, independently evaluated for effectiveness. There is little evidence suggesting VPP is effective or efficient at reducing workplace injuries and fatalities, while OSHA's enforcement program has been studied and shown at the workplace level to be effective in reducing injuries and illnesses. In 2009, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) analyzed OSHA's VPP program and recommended multiple revisions to the program.¹⁸ GAO recommended that the secretary of labor direct OSHA to: 1) develop a documentation policy for information on actions taken by OSHA's regions in response to fatalities and serious injuries at VPP sites; 2) establish internal controls that ensure consistent compliance by its regions with VPP policies; and 3) develop goals and performance measures for the Voluntary Protection Program.

Fifth, VPP benefits large corporations over workers. Those most in need of compliance assistance are high hazard industries and occupations and those with workers at serious risk of facing retaliation for speaking up against unsafe working conditions. But in fact, most of the companies in VPP are large, multinational companies, not small businesses because those participate in OSHA's SHARP program.¹⁹ Large employers generally do not need compliance assistance.

Sixth, VPP systematically weakens OSHA enforcement. Instead of focusing on enforcing safety laws and regulations, VPP requires that OSHA assign personnel and funding to maintaining VPP, which inherently benefits employers rather than protecting at-risk workers. VPP requires significant resources and administrative labor to both evaluate and maintain companies in the program, thus consuming OSHA's already limited resources, also noted in GAO's 2009 findings.²⁰

In 1982, the year VPP was initiated, OSHA was handed a budget that allowed it to spend \$6.40 on each worker in the nation. That number has significantly declined since—by 38% to only \$3.92 in 2024 and the number of OSHA staff has greatly diminished at a pace that has not kept up with the

¹⁸ U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2009). *OSHA'S Voluntary Protection Programs: Improved Oversight and Controls Would Better Ensure Program Quality*. Available at: [GAO.gov/assets/gao-09-395.pdf](https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-09-395.pdf).

¹⁹ See [OSHA.gov/x/pp/bynaics](https://www.osha.gov/x/pp/bynaics).

²⁰ U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2009). *OSHA'S Voluntary Protection Programs: Improved Oversight and Controls Would Better Ensure Program Quality*. Available at: [GAO.gov/assets/gao-09-395.pdf](https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-09-395.pdf).

43% growth in employment over the years (see Table 1 above). In other words, after VPP was established, OSHA has had many fewer resources to devote to preventing atrocities at work.

Certification in voluntary programs are for setting up systems, without showing they actually mitigate hazards, and reduce injuries, illnesses or fatalities. But if VPP companies are not complying with OSHA standards and maintaining a safe work environment, they are not following the law and there is little redress until there is a serious incident such as a fatality, which is much too late for working families.

Additionally, previous and recent attempts to reform or mandate VPP have been plagued with issues that would reinforce the problems described above, and even require them of the agency. Some of these include contracting VPP oversight responsibilities to some unaccountable third-party system, prohibiting OSHA from charging a fee for companies to apply to the program and opening up levels of 'participation' that required little commitment by employers that may never result in being a VPP site.

OSHA needs to spend its time and resources on core responsibilities, not expending additional efforts on voluntary efforts. OSHA needs to focus its few resources on addressing oversight for the worst companies, assisting small businesses, and targeting industries with vulnerable workers, not on recognition programs that are for the largest companies that otherwise would have safety programs on their own. Large employers who are inclined to cut corners on safety do not want compliance assistance; instead, they need stronger enforcement. We oppose any expansion of a problematic program where such widesweeping problems remain.

Conclusion

Every employer should have a safety program. Employers should also have resources from OSHA to help them understand standards, understand existing and emerging hazards, and how to mitigate hazards at the source, using the hierarchy of controls.

We do not need a “better” voluntary approach. It is a time to return to the core functions of the agency’s mandate by Congress. The cornerstones of the OSH Act are standard setting and enforcement, which are maximized when coupled with effective education, resources and training. Voluntary compliance does not have an accountability structure. The expansion of voluntary programs with significant problems like VPP will come at the cost of sacrificing enforcement against the worst acting employers.

Our progress on preventing fatalities and job injuries and illnesses has slowed not because we have not been recognizing employers for following the law or having safety programs; that progress has stalled because our leaders have constricted government oversight on workplaces across the country. Current efforts to “deregulate” actually remove worker safety and health protections from the books that employers do not like, but that save workers’ lives.

All of this severely impairs the ability for the government—the trusted authority for workplace health and safety inspections—to keep workers safe on the job.

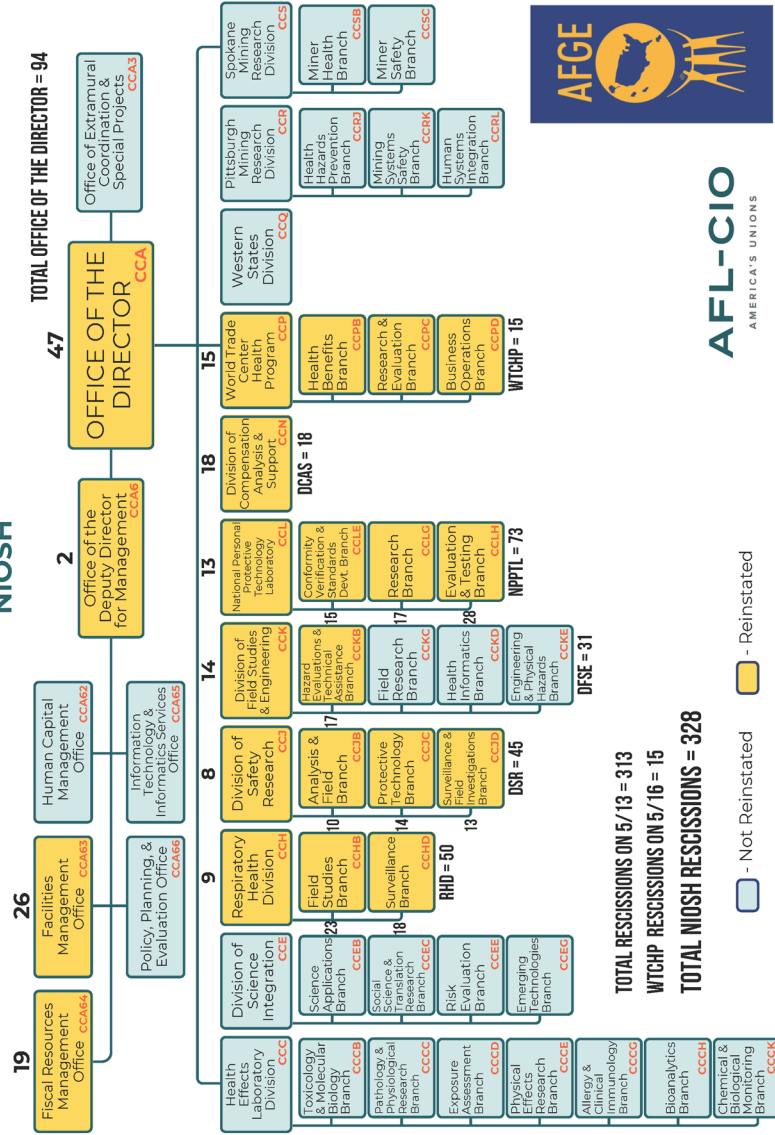
Finally, several key recommendations for the subcommittee’s consideration include:

1. Increase the budgets for core functions of job safety and health agencies, including OSHA, so that they can carry out their statutory mandate to protect workers.
2. End reductions in job safety and health agency staff and core duties that keep our nation’s workers safe and restore program areas that have been eliminated.
3. Prevent rollbacks to job safety and health standards.
4. Ensure reforms to the regulatory system make it more transparent, inclusive, faster and easier for agencies like OSHA to follow their mandate, rather than add burdens to agencies or give regulatory review power to other branches of the government.

Thank you for inviting me to testify today, and I would be happy to answer your questions.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

NIOSH



AFL-CIO
AMERICA'S UNIONS

NIOSH Staff Keep America's Workers Safe



- Not Reinstated



- Reinstated

Office of Extramural Coordination and Special Projects

Funds more than 50 applied research and training centers, including:

- multidisciplinary centers like the Education Research Centers (ERCs), the National Construction Center, Agriculture Safety Centers, others;
- research grants for occupational safety & health research and the World Trade Center Health Program;
- cooperative agreements for state surveillance programs that monitor work-related injuries, illnesses, exposures and fatalities, mesothelioma research, and commercial fishing occupational safety research & training;
- specialty training program grants that support the development of the next generation of occupational health professionals, including college and graduate students, post-graduates, and emergency responders, as well as conference grants;
- mine safety & health training programs; and
- small business innovation research.

Health Effects Laboratory Division (HELD)

Conducts laboratory-based research in immunology, allergy, and inflammation to evaluate and determine how workplace exposure causes disease and injury, and can be prevented. Develops analytical methods that are used by both private and public sector occupational health professionals to measure chemical exposure hazards. Supports Health Hazard Evaluation and other field programs with analytical sampling and processing. All NIOSH field sampling and analysis is coordinated through HELD.

Division of Science Integration (DSI)

Synthesizes and translates all scientific NIOSH evidence into practical guidance and recommendations that prevent occupational disease, injury and death:

- Conducts risk assessments for occupational exposures to hazardous chemicals—often using data from NIOSH toxicological studies, industry-wide occupational exposure and illness surveillance studies, and Health Hazard Evaluations—and develops Recommended Exposure Limits (RELs) for those chemicals.
- Authors the NIOSH Pocket Guide to Chemical Hazards, which is consistently one of the most requested CDC publications and utilized by emergency responders and health & safety professionals worldwide (more than 1.3 million downloads in 2021).
- Designs and implements occupational safety & health training programs, such as the Safe, Skilled, Ready Workforce Program for young workers, temp workers, and workers with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Respiratory Health Division (RHD)

Oversees research & administers service programs to prevent work-related respiratory diseases caused by hazardous occupational agents via surveillance programs and field investigations.

Division of Safety Research (DSR)

Conducts research to identify and reduce causes of traumatic occupational injuries and develops interventions to prevent them.

Division of Field Studies and Engineering (DFSE)

Conducts field **Health Hazard Evaluations**, which require expertise and operations from other divisions not reinstated. Conducts field based exposure assessments & epidemiologic studies to characterize and control workplace health hazards, which support the development of practical guidance and recommendations that reduce occupational illness and injuries, such as Recommended Exposure Limits and Hazard Reviews. Researches, designs, and implements ventilation, ergonomic, and noise exposure controls. Responds to public health emergencies, such as infectious disease outbreaks, natural disasters, and industrial accidents. Most of these employees have not been reinstated.

National Personal Protective Technology Laboratory (NPPTL)

Conducts laboratory and field research, surveillance, standards development, interventions, and conformity assessments of personal protective equipment (PPE), and tests and monitors the marketplace for counterfeit PPE.

Division of Compensation Analysis and Support (DCAS)

Provides scientific support for and administers claims involving nuclear weapons workers who develop cancer from radiation exposure.

World Trade Center Health Program (WTCHP)

Provides medical monitoring and treatment for first responders and survivors of September 11. Medical conditions include respiratory diseases, cancers, and mental disorders such as PTSD.

Western States Division (WSD), Spokane, WA

Responsible for conducting research to reduce a wide variety of occupational safety and health hazards faced by workers in the Western United States, including fishing and oil & gas fatalities.

Pittsburgh Mining Research Division (PMRD)

Conducts research to prevent mining illnesses, injuries, and fatalities across all mining sectors. Heavily focuses on coal & metal/nonmetal mining safety with its simulated research laboratory.

Spokane Mining Research division (SMRD)

Conducts research preventing mining illnesses, injuries, and fatalities across all mining sectors. Heavily focused on rock mass stability, dust and diesel exposures, and technologies that improve miner health and hazard detection.



Major OSHA Health Standards Since 1971

Standard	Year Final Standard Issued
1. Asbestos	1972
2. Fourteen Carcinogens	1974
3. Vinyl Chloride	1974
4. Coke Oven Emissions	1976
5. Benzene (vacated)	1978
6. DBCP	1978
7. Arsenic	1978
8. Cotton Dust	1978
9. Acrylonitrile	1978
10. Lead	1978
11. Cancer Policy	1980
12. Access to Medical Records	1980
13. Hearing Conservation	1981
14. Hazard Communication	1983
15. Ethylene Oxide	1984
16. Asbestos (revised)	1986
17. Field Sanitation	1987
18. Benzene (revised)	1987
19. Formaldehyde	1987
20. Access to Medical Records (modified)	1988
21. Permissible Exposure Limits (PELs) Update (vacated)	1989
22. Chemical Exposure in Laboratories	1990
23. Bloodborne Pathogens	1991
24. 4,4'-methylenedianiline	1992
25. Cadmium	1992
26. Asbestos (partial response to court remand)	1992
27. Formaldehyde (response to court remand)	1992
28. Lead (construction)	1993
29. Asbestos (response to court remand)	1994
30. 1,3-Butadiene	1996
31. Methylene Chloride	1998
32. Respiratory Protection	1998
33. Ergonomics (revoked under the Congressional Review Act)	2000
34. Bloodborne Pathogens – Needlestick Injuries	2001
35. Hexavalent Chromium (response to court order)	2006
36. Hazard Communication – Globally Harmonized System	2012
37. Crystalline Silica	2016
38. Beryllium	2017
39. Occupational Exposure to COVID-19 for Health Care Emergency Temporary Standard ¹	2021
40. COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing Emergency Temporary Standard (withdrawn after court injunction)	2021

Source: Code of Federal Regulations.

¹The COVID-19 ETS for Health care was issued on June 21, 2021. On Dec. 27, 2021, OSHA announced it planned to withdraw the standard and the standard has not been in effect since, other than the recordkeeping provisions. On March 23, 2022, OSHA published a notice for limited reopening of the record and an informal hearing on its interim final rule. A public hearing was held on April 27, 2022. At the time of publication of this report, a permanent standard has not been issued and the final rule has been under review at the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs under Executive Order 12966 since Dec. 7, 2022.

Major OSHA Safety Standards Since 1971

Standard	Year Final Standard Issued
1. Cranes/Derricks (load indicators)	1972
2. Roll-over Protective Structures (construction)	1972
3. Power Transmission and Distribution	1972
4. Scaffolding, Pump Jack Scaffolding and Roof Catch Platform	1972
5. Lavatories for Industrial Employment	1973
6. Trucks, Cranes, Derricks and Indoor General Storage	1973
7. Temporary Flooring – Skeleton Steel Construction	1974
8. Mechanical Power Presses	1974
9. Telecommunications	1975
10. Roll-over Protective Structures of Agricultural Tractors	1975
11. Industrial Slings	1975
12. Guarding of Farm Field Equipment, Farmstead Equipment and Cotton Gins	1976
13. Ground-Fault Protection	1976
14. Commercial Diving Operations	1977
15. Servicing Multi-Piece Rim Wheels	1980
16. Fire Protection	1980
17. Guarding of Low-Pitched Roof Perimeters	1980
18. Design Safety Standards for Electrical Standards	1981
19. Latch-Open Devices	1982
20. Marine Terminals	1983
21. Servicing of Single-Piece and Multi-Piece Rim Wheels	1984
22. Electrical Safety in Construction (Part 1926)	1986
23. General Environmental Controls – TAGS (Part 1910)	1986
24. Marine Terminals – Servicing Single-Piece Rim Wheels (Part 1917)	1987
25. Grain Handling Facilities (Part 1910)	1987
26. Safety Testing of Certification of Certain Workplace Equipment and Materials	1988
27. Crane or Derrick Suspended Personnel Platforms (Part 1926)	1988
28. Concrete and Masonry Construction (Part 1926)	1988
29. Mechanical Power Presses (modified)	1988
30. Powered Platforms (Part 1910)	1989
31. Underground Construction (Part 1926)	1989
32. Hazardous Waste Operations (Part 1910) (mandated by Congress)	1989
33. Excavations (Part 1926)	1989
34. Control of Hazardous Energy Sources (lockout/tagout) (Part 1910)	1989
35. Stairways and Ladders (Part 1926)	1990
36. Concrete and Masonry Lift-Slab Operations	1990
37. Electrical Safety Work Practices (Part 1910)	1990
38. Welding, Cutting and Brazing (Part 1910) (revision)	1990
39. Chemical Process Safety	1992
40. Confined Spaces (general industry)	1993

Major OSHA Safety Standards Since 1971

Standard	Year Final Standard Issued
41. Fall Protection	1994
42. Electrical Power Generation	1994
43. Personal Protective Equipment	1994
44. Logging Operations	1995
45. Scaffolds	1996
46. PPE for Shipyards	1996
47. Longshoring and Marine Terminals	1997
48. Powered Industrial Truck Operator Training	1998
49. Steel Erection	2001
50. Electrical Equipment Installation	2007
51. Employer Payment for Personal Protective Equipment	2007
52. Cranes and Derricks in Construction	2010
53. General Working Conditions for Shipyard Employment	2011
54. Electric Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution	2014
55. Confined Spaces (construction)	2015
56. Walking-Working Surfaces and Personal Protective Equipment (Fall Protection Systems) (Part 1910)	2016
57. Improve Tracking of Workplace Injuries and Illnesses	2024

Source: Code of Federal Regulations.

**Funding for OSHA Worker Safety Training Programs vs.
Employer Compliance Assistance Programs,
FY 2007–2025 (\$ in thousands)**

Fiscal Year	Worker Safety and Health Training	Employer Compliance Assistance (Federal and State)
FY 2007 Request	\$0	\$129,900
FY 2007 Enacted	\$10,100	\$126,000
FY 2008 Request	\$0	\$134,100
FY 2008 Enacted	\$9,900	\$123,800
FY 2009 Request	\$0	\$131,100
FY 2009 Enacted	\$10,000	\$127,200
FY 2010 Request	\$10,000	\$128,175
FY 2010 Enacted	\$10,750	\$128,200
FY 2011 Request	\$11,000	\$126,100
FY 2011 Enacted	\$10,729	\$128,200
FY 2012 Request	\$12,000	\$129,800
FY 2012 Enacted	\$10,700	\$134,200
FY 2013 Request	\$10,700	\$131,000
FY 2013 Enacted ¹	\$10,150	\$116,300
FY 2014 Request	\$10,700	\$133,200
FY 2014 Enacted	\$10,700	\$127,200
FY 2015 Request	\$10,700	\$128,200
FY 2015 Enacted	\$10,500	\$126,200
FY 2016 Request	\$10,700	\$130,800
FY 2016 Enacted	\$10,537	\$126,558
FY 2017 Request	\$10,537	\$132,558
FY 2017 Enacted	\$10,537	\$130,481
FY 2018 Request	\$0	\$130,016
FY 2018 Enacted	\$10,537	\$130,481
FY 2019 Request	\$0	\$134,715
FY 2019 Enacted	\$10,537	\$133,481
FY 2020 Request	\$0	\$133,414
FY 2020 Enacted	\$11,537	\$135,981
FY 2021 Request	\$0	\$136,910
FY 2021 Enacted ²	\$11,787	\$136,731
FY 2022 Request ²	\$13,787	\$149,675
FY 2022 Enacted ²	\$11,787	\$136,731
FY 2023 Request ²	\$13,787	\$155,108
FY 2023 Enacted ²	\$12,787	\$141,422
FY 2024 Request	\$13,787	\$165,233
FY 2024 Enacted	\$12,787	\$140,423
FY 2025 Request	\$12,787	\$140,423
FY 2025 Enacted	\$12,787	\$140,423

Source: Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Annual Congressional Budget Justification.

¹FY 2013 funding levels reflect the budget cuts mandated by the sequester.

²The funding levels do not include additionally appropriated COVID-19 funds to the Department of Labor for FY 2021 through FY 2023 through the American Relief Plan, passed on March 10, 2021. Additional funds included \$200 million for pandemic-related worker protection activities, including \$100 million for OSHA, of which \$10 million have been used for training grants and not less than \$5 million for COVID-19 enforcement.

Chairman MACKENZIE. Thank you. Last, I will recognize Mr. Sell for your testimony.

STATEMENT OF MR. KEVIN SELL, SENIOR MANAGER, CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT, KWEST GROUP, ALEXANDRIA, KENTUCKY

Mr. SELL. Thank you, Chairman Mackenzie, Ranking Member Omar, and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the invitation to testify this morning and for the opportunity to discuss Voluntary Protection Programs, and the future of Occupational Safety and Health Administration's compliance assistance.

Again, my name is Kevin Sell, I currently serve as the Senior Manager of Corporate Development at Kwest Group. We are a 100 percent employee-owned company founded in 2003. Kwest Group has grown from its roots in Port Clinton, Ohio to become a trusted partner across the United States.

Today Kwest Group is licensed in nearly 40 states, with seven regional offices, and two craft education facilities. Today I am testifying on behalf of Associated Builders and Contractors, a national trade association with 67 chapters, representing more than 23,000 member companies, and millions of craft professionals.

I began my career as a firefighter, and later shift commander, and that helped me launch a career in construction. Before Kwest Group, I contributed to the significant growth of Century Construction and United Group Services through safety quality programs and workforce development solutions from 1990 to 2004.

I have also held leadership roles on both the Kentucky Workers' Compensation Funding Commission, and I chaired the Kentucky Occupational Safety Health and Review Commission. Aside from my education, I hold several certifications in the health and safety field.

The area offices of OSHA provide employees and employers with valuable expertise and support through the compliance assistant specialist, and their challenge program that is a path to VPP.

By having a partnership with the area office, you gain non-enforcement support, so you can work with OSHA to get better and reduce risk to your entire team. This is especially important for construction as many of us have mobile workforce that moves around a lot, and this presents its own set of challenges that are far different and more complex than most general industry sites.

In 1999, we met with then Region 5 administration Mike Connors, who challenged us to take the ABC's STEP, which is Safety Training Evaluation Process and challenge program to a construction version of the Voluntary Protection Program, or VPP. We started that demonstration program in 2001.

VPP in every industry allows employers, employees and labor to apply for an audit that leads to the VPP designation. Many of us call the VPP, OSHA's seal of approval. The VPP makes the work environment better, safer, and even supports business growth and job security.

It is also important to note that positions like the compliance assistance specialist in VPP allow OSHA to focus on the bad employers and use their VPP partners as subject matter experts and resources.

OSHA standards are minimum standards, and it is far better for employees to be protected by a VPP employer. It is also important to mention a bit more about ABC STEP Program. This process gives you a position of where your health and safety program is at, and how to get better, based on levels like gold, platinum, diamond.

When I mentor construction companies applying for VPP, I always ask them for their STEP level, or have them start this process. STEP was a key factor in creating VPP in construction, and I still find it of high value to that application process. STEP has also evolved to add something of great importance to all of us in every industry, and that is mental health and suicide prevention.

Together, with all other aspects, we now focus on total human health. I look forward to discussing this important issue with the Subcommittee today and hopefully provide insight into the successful programs. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sell follows:]



Testimony of:

Kevin Sell

Senior Manager Corporate Development

Kwest Group

Perrysburg, Ohio

U.S. House Committee on Education and Workforce

Subcommittee on Workforce Protections

Safe Workplaces, Stronger Partnerships: The Future of OSHA Compliance Assistance

July 16, 2025

Chairman Mackenzie, Ranking Member Omar and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the invitation to testify this morning and for the opportunity to discuss Voluntary Protection Programs and the future of Occupational Safety and Health Administration compliance assistance.

My name is Kevin Sell, and I am the senior manager of corporate development at [Kwest Group](#), a 100% employee-owned company founded in 2003. Kwest Group has grown from its roots in Port Clinton, Ohio, to become a trusted partner across the United States. Today, Kwest Group is licensed in nearly 40 states, boasting a broad geographic presence with seven regional offices and two craft education facilities.

I am testifying on behalf of [Associated Builders and Contractors](#), a national construction trade association with 67 chapters representing more than 23,000 member companies and millions of workers.

In 2024, Kwest Group was honored as ABC's Contractor of Year. This award recognizes member companies for corporate integrity and commitment to health and safety, professional development and expert workforce development.

I began my career as a firefighter and shift commander, which enhanced my ability to make quick and complex executive decisions throughout my business career. Before joining Kwest Group, I contributed to the significant growth of Century Construction and United Group Services through safety and quality programs, workforce development solutions and relationship management, from 1990 to 2024.

I have also held leadership roles on both the Kentucky Workers' Compensation Funding Commission and the Kentucky Occupational Safety & Health Review Commission, where I served as chair. I hold multiple certifications and continue to maintain ongoing education and training in the field.

The area offices of OSHA have provided employees and employers with valuable expertise and support through Compliance Assistance Specialists and their Challenge Program, which serves as a pathway to the Voluntary Protection Program. By fostering a relationship—or better yet, a partnership—with the area office, employers gain nonenforcement support, allowing them to work collaboratively with OSHA to improve workplace safety and reduce risk for their teams. This is especially important in construction, as many of us have a mobile workforce that presents a unique set of challenges far different and more complex than most general industry sites.

In 1999, we met with then-Region Five Administrator Mike Connors, who challenged us to adapt ABC's STEP and Challenge Program into a construction version of the Voluntary Protection Program. We began a demonstration program in 2001. VPP, across all industries, allows employers, employees and labor to apply for an audit that can lead to their VPP designation. Many of us refer to the VPP as OSHA's "seal of approval." VPP makes the work environment better and safer and even supports business growth. It is also important to note that positions like the compliance assistance specialist and programs like VPP allow OSHA to focus on bad actors while leveraging their VPP partners as subject matter experts and resources. OSHA standards are the minimum requirement; employees are far better protected under a VPP employer.

Founded in 1989 as a safety benchmarking and improvement tool, [ABC's STEP® Health and Safety Management System](#) has evolved into an industry-leading health and safety management system that demonstrates leadership and cultural transformation among its members, regardless of company size or type of work. Participating ABC member firms measure their safety processes and policies on key components through a detailed questionnaire with the goal of implementing or enhancing health and safety programs that reduce jobsite incident rates. Companies receive a rating of Diamond, Platinum, Gold, Silver, Bronze or Participant based on their safety performance. STEP members prove that industry-leading health and safety is achievable with a companywide commitment to health and safety as a core value.

The [2025 ABC Health and Safety Performance Report](#) documents the dramatic impact of deploying proactive health and safety practices—leading indicators such as new hire safety orientation, substance abuse prevention and toolbox talks—to reduce recordable incidents by up to 85%, making the best-performing companies nearly seven times safer than the industry average. The 2025 edition was based on data gathered from ABC STEP participants recording more than 1 billion hours of work in construction, heavy construction, civil engineering and specialty trades.

When I mentor construction companies applying for VPP, I always ask for their STEP level or encourage them to start this process because any company can participate in STEP. STEP was a key factor in creating the VPP for construction, and I continue to find it highly valuable in the application process. STEP has also evolved to include something critically important to all of us in every industry: mental health and suicide prevention. Together, with all other aspects, we now focus on Total Human Health.

As an [OSHA special government employee](#), I have proudly contributed my time and expertise to advancing workplace safety and health for businesses of all sizes. Since 2002, I have participated in numerous construction and general industry approval and re-approval audits as part of OSHA's VPP. Drawing on my diverse background in fire service, aviation and general industry, I have supported OSHA's mission by lending a private sector perspective to on-site evaluations and collaborating with agency staff to strengthen safety and health management systems. This role has allowed me to help employers and employees across a broad spectrum of industries to enhance their workplace environments, achieve VPP recognition and build a culture of continuous improvement. As an SGE, I am honored to be part of a program that not only extends OSHA's resources but also empowers companies of all sizes to prioritize the well-being of their workers and achieve excellence in occupational safety and health.

I look forward to discussing these important issues with the Subcommittee today and providing insight into these successful programs.

Chairman MACKENZIE. Thank you. Under Committee Rule 9, we will now ask questions of the witnesses under the 5-minute rule, and I will be recognizing myself for the first series of questions. Mr. Williams, your written testimony noted that the mission of the Voluntary Protection Program is to send workers home from work in safe or better condition than when they arrived.

How do OSHA's compliance assistance programs, like VPP, complement the enforcement side of OSHA's work in achieving this goal?

Mr. WILLIAMS. Thank you for your question. Quite simply, VPP is an efficiency tool for OSHA in that it supplements personnel from VPP sites in the form of special government employees who go out and conduct audits, can review applications in some regions, and the like. It does free up those resources, potentially for enforcement efforts.

It also allows VPP itself, the performance of those companies and sites in the program. It allows OSHA to focus on, as the witness

stated, the truly bad actors who for reasons incomprehensible to the moral mind, refuse to comply with OSHA requirements.

We know the VPP sites from a performance standpoint are well above beyond compliance, and they are well above beyond their performance, their peers, so VPP sites also commit to that pay it forward model, where their resources, their best practices, are openly shared amongst industry, amongst their peers, not as proprietary, but in order to help send those workers home safe every day.

Chairman MACKENZIE. Well, I appreciate that response, and it actually sets up my next question perfectly. Mr. Harper, you highlight in your written testimony the opportunities given to you as a special government employee, or an SGE. As an SGE you are able to offer your knowledge and experience to smaller businesses just starting out, and businesses in need of strengthening their current safety practices.

How has your work as an SGE benefited smaller businesses?

Mr. HARPER. With the small businesses, we have been able to partner with them through SGE initiatives, through Voluntary Protection Program by going out visiting both sites, directly partnering with them, sharing those best practices with them, as well as inviting them to our sites to partner with them.

It is a great benefit to those smaller sites, as well as to our site to partner with other businesses that may have the same issues that we have faced before, and we are able to help identify those solutions directly, so there will be businesses and community involvement together to send every employee home safe and sound.

Chairman MACKENZIE. We appreciate the work you do helping small businesses there. I think that is fantastic. How does that benefit your organization, Cintas?

Mr. HARPER. With Cintas, especially with the customers that we have, we have been able to partner with those small businesses to help them with their initiatives and help us as far as a company to build that relationship with that site. If they continue to build and grow that helps us long run on our side as well, but helps us with our knowledge, sharing best practices from those sites, and things that we are able to benefit from that with the SGE evaluations and tools that we get from those sites.

Chairman MACKENZIE. Fantastic. My final question is for Mr. Sell. By having the Voluntary Protection Program in place, OSHA gains industry Ambassadors who enthusiastically offer their expertise to industry safety efforts, as we just heard. OSHA may also exempt VPP sites from programmed inspections, which allows the agency to allocate resources toward expanding outreach, or when needed, enforcement.

Having participated in the VPP, can you highlight the benefits an employer and its employees receive from the program?

Mr. SELL. Certainly, and thank you for the question, Mr. Chairman. As the employer of the group, the company, the benefits received is that you are starting that—it is not just a partnership. I would argue that it is a relationship, and you are in regular communication with your respective area office.

Getting to know those people and what they do also gives you a—more access to standards that are coming out, more input. The

employees understand that they are working for a company and with a company where they are engaged in the voluntary protection process, and where they look at OSHA as a partner.

They do not look at them as the occupational police, which I am not saying that is not needed, I am just saying in the VPP setting, that it is a cooperation, it is engagement, it is collaboration with the agency, which is I think we all would welcome more collaboration with Federal agencies that actually benefit employees.

Chairman MACKENZIE. I appreciate that answer. Thank you. With that, I will conclude my questioning, and next I will recognize the Ranking Member for 5 minutes of questioning.

Ms. OMAR. Ms. Reindel, thank you so much for joining us today. Just this week OSHA announced a major policy change related to the monetary penalties for workplace safety violations. Under current law, what is the maximum penalty OSHA can seek for a serious violation?

Ms. REINDEL. Excuse me, the maximum penalty is \$16,550, so it is roughly \$16,000.

Ms. OMAR. What if a worker is killed?

Ms. REINDEL. If a worker is killed, it depends on the type of violation. It could also be a maximum of \$16,000 if it is a serious violation.

Ms. OMAR. Just to be clear, these are only the maximum penalties, right?

Ms. REINDEL. These are maximum penalties. They are often much, much lower. In our annual report we do look at this, and for Federal OSHA the average serious penalty that OSHA issues is \$4,000 for a serious violation of the OSH Act.

Ms. OMAR. Now, can you briefly tell us what OSHA announced this week, and what are the consequences of this decision, and will workers' lives be at risk?

Ms. REINDEL. Sure. OSHA announced on Monday a new policy change related to its penalty structure and related to reducing penalties for businesses when they are cited by OSHA. OSHA has always, long-term, has had four categories for good faith penalty reduction, history (lack of a history of violations), penalty reduction, quick-fix penalty reduction, and size-based penalty reductions.

What this policy did here was it changed the criteria, and it is letting more employers into the penalty reduction space, and that includes large employers, not just small businesses. It also increases the penalty reductions to 70 percent, so you get fined by OSHA you can have up to a 70 percent penalty reduction now, or 80 percent for willful violations.

If you have not had an inspection in 5 years, you actually can have a reduction in penalties. What it used to be was that you had to have an inspection in the last 5 years without any serious violations in order to achieve that.

Ms. OMAR. Wow. What message does it send when this administration is willing to make it cheaper to break the law?

Ms. REINDEL. Sure. This new policy just creates incentives for employers to take the low road, and to not follow the law. If you know that, you know, we already know that OSHA does not show up to workplaces because of its resources that it cannot make it to so many workplaces every year, and further now we know that if

they will show up to employers can expect, you know, penalties that are much too low to be a deterrent for violating our Nation's safety and health laws.

Ms. OMAR. In May, Secretary Chavez-DeRemer told this Committee that she would double-down in addressing child labor, and yet her Labor Department recently sent a draft rule to OMB on child labor, which has not been made public, that may actually weaken child labor protections.

With child labor violations rising across the country, we need to make our child labor laws stronger, not weaker. I hope everyone here can agree with that because potential rollback is very troubling. Ms. Reindel, if this new DOL rule increases hours that children can work, or exposes them to more dangerous jobs, what exactly is the Trump administration doubling down on?

Ms. REINDEL. Sure. Yes, we have not seen this rule in full yet, but it is by title about hazardous occupations for children to work in, so we actually have seen these things before in the first Trump administration where they have attempted to lower the age that children could work in dangerous occupations and having them work at different hours for long time periods.

Right now, for decades our Nation has, you know, prevented children from working in certain hazardous occupations. We have had many violations of this over the years, and child labor violations are a very clear indicator of other health and safety violations that are going on in workplaces.

Ms. OMAR. Thank you. With that, I yield back.

Chairman MACKENZIE. Thank you. Next, we will go to the Chairman of the Full Committee, Mr. Walberg from Michigan.

Mr. WALBERG. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks for holding this hearing, and thanks to the panel for being here. Mr. Williams, you indicated that in your written testimony that an estimated 1,900 worksites participate in the Voluntary Protection Program. What percentage of those sites are unionsites?

Mr. WILLIAMS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. While there is no accurate data put out by OSHA in terms of worksite affiliation, labor, non-labor, or union, non-union, in looking through the list of unions that are signatories to VPP agreements, and with those sites, a conservative estimate would be 15 percent. I would put that above 20 percent of VPP sites that are union worksites.

I say that because the data is incomplete to some extent. For example, in California, 61 percent of VPP sites are union affiliated.

Mr. WALBERG. Okay. What additional requirements are there for worksites who are represented by a union and want to join VPP, and then if you could also respond what kind of feedback have you received from the unions about these sites?

Mr. WILLIAMS. Certainly. Any site that employs union labor must have every trade that is represented on that site sign off on any VPP agreement. If even one declines, then there is no—then we do not proceed. The VPP process stops.

Labor maintains a critical role, and a critical oversight role in terms of if at any point labor looks at that VPP agreement, looks at that site and says you are not upholding your end of the bargain, management. We can withdraw our signature, and the site is out of VPP.

In terms of feedback from local labor affiliates, it has been overwhelmingly positive, just simply based on the number of local signatories that I cite in my opening statement, but I want to give you a statement in their own words. This is from Jack Griffith, who works at the Central Plateau Cleanup Company out in Richland, Washington.

He is a member of the Hanford Atomic Metal Trades Council, and Local 1951 of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers. He is a full-time union safety representative VPP coordinator. He has been involved in VPP for almost 30 years now and in his words, and I quote, "VPP is not a flavor of the month program."

It requires a management commitment with employee involvement. Unionized sites must endorse their commitment, or the application will not be accepted by OSHA. Attaining VPP Star recognition is not easy for companies. They must have implemented an effective safety and health management system. Fostering a culture of safety and continuous improvement can take time.

I have seen where the safety culture needed to change to meet the rigorous requirements of going above and beyond the basic OSHA requirements to demonstrate exemplary safety and health management systems. On a VPP site, every employee has the right to stop work without fear of retaliation when identifying anything that was not covered."

Mr. WALBERG. It is not surprising that he would State that. That is just common sense, and what the program is, is a high standard program that you have to voluntarily commit to, to keep the job. Thank you. Mr. Harper, there is a misguided belief that by participating in VPP, employees scoot their compliance obligations.

However, your written testimony states that VPP worksites are held to an even higher standard than non-participants through the program, audits, and evaluation process. Could you briefly explain why that is, and do you believe this high standard has had a direct impact on employee recruitment, retention, and growth there at Cintas?

Mr. HARPER. Thank you for your question. When it comes to the high level of importance for safety at Cintas, and within our facilities, partnering with our employees has definitely helped to further the importance of safety. When it comes to audits that happens with OSHA, we have to make sure that we hold to a high standard with the OSHA on an annual basis. We have got to submit our records of where we are for continuous improvement, and then every so often they have to come back and re-evaluate our site to make sure that we are held to that standard.

In addition, when submitting our applications, we have to be lower than the industry average, lower or at the industry average based on the BLS rate, and so our incident rates has to be below, so they are also looking at our involvement from our employees and leaders, as well as our numbers.

It has definitely helped us with the accountability side, as far as having OSHA there to help partner with us, and continue our efforts, sending partners home every day safe to their families, and so it helps with our programs initially.

Mr. WALBERG. Thank you. Not much time left, but Mr. Sell, yes or no, has the participation in VPP and other compliance assistance program shifted the culture of your workplace to prioritize safety?

Mr. SELL. Yes, it has.

Mr. WALBERG. That is all I wanted to hear. Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman MACKENZIE. Fantastic. Next, we are going to go to Mr. Takano from California.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the witnesses for being here. Ms. Reindel, the National Institutes for Occupational Safety and Health, or NIOSH, is the only Federal agency that conducts research on workers' safety and hazardous health matters.

As you describe in your testimony, NIOSH researches which chemicals could shorten their workers' lifespan, how future accidents can be prevented, and the application of life-saving interventions that protect workers and employers, among other things. Is it true that the staff of NIOSH was gutted this week, depriving the agency of enough staff to function?

Ms. REINDEL. Thank you for the question. In the spring, the Trump administration fired two-thirds of the staff of NIOSH, and even though some of them have been returned, more than a third of the agency is still out, and those are people who do critical work around researching.

Mr. TAKANO. Critical work, these are the trained researchers, people with advanced degrees?

Ms. REINDEL. That is right. They are uniquely skilled. This is not—this is a small field with a very high level of expertise, and a very unique level of expertise to do occupational safety and health.

Mr. TAKANO. Can you give me a number, an estimated number of staff that will be affected?

Ms. REINDEL. Sure. We still have more than 400 staff who are out of NIOSH, and these are people who do critical mining safety and health research, critical research on warehouses, and many other, you know, studies and industry partnerships.

Mr. TAKANO. What might be the immediate consequences of these staff cuts? Do you have some ideas in mind?

Ms. REINDEL. Sure. You know, for instance in the mining sector at NIOSH, they do long-term studies, but they also do, you know, they test explosive environments. They have very, you know, critical state-of-the-art facilities where you can test explosive environments, for instance, or in mines, prevent roof collapses. You also have partnerships with the fishing industry, with the construction industry.

These are a lot of the industries that are still—the research is highly impactful, and it is also research that is applied, and it is immediate, so it is understanding why employers or employees are not adopting safety practices and helping them.

Mr. TAKANO. Great, thank you. My district contains one of the largest logistics hubs in the world. In the Inland Empire, more than 200,000 people are employed by the warehousing industry. Warehousing work has among the highest rates of serious injury

of any industry in the country. Workers suffer life-long injuries from overexertion and repetitive stress, which can permanently destroy an employee's back, wrists, and other joints.

Heavy objects and equipment that mean a collision or a fall could be deadly, and that has resulted in hundreds of worker fatalities per year. As online shopping booms, so does the safety risk associated with that industry. A 2024 Senate report indicated that one Amazon Prime Day, just one Prime Day at Amazon, led to a rate—a rate of 45 injuries per 100 workers. That is nearly a 50 percent injury rate.

Ms. REINDEL, researchers at NIOSH's Western States Division were conducting research into making warehouse work safer. Their staff was just eliminated. How will cuts at NIOSH affect my constituents?

Ms. REINDEL. Absolutely. The Western States Division is a smaller office out in the Western states that is incredibly efficient, and they affect warehouses because they do important work on ergonomics, which you were just talking about, and preventing musculoskeletal disorders from repetitive stress injuries, and also on fatigue.

I mean warehouses have extreme issues with workers working long hours, fatigue issues, transportation issues related to the logistics industry, so we can expect without NIOSH that injuries and illnesses will go up, fatalities will go up, and this is going to harm generations to come.

Mr. TAKANO. I just—we just passed this Big, Ugly Bill, 160 billion dollars to do immigration enforcement. A budget that is bigger than like several defense budgets put together. There is a tradeoff here. We are going to eliminate an office, a small office, that could make warehouse work safer for my constituents, so I am seeing a tradeoff here, Ms. Reindel, and I am very, very alarmed by it. I yield back.

Chairman MACKENZIE. Thank you. Next, we will go to Mr. Messmer from Indiana.

Mr. MESSMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for the witnesses for being here today, especially my fellow Hoosier, Mr. Harper. Mr. Harper, compliance assistance programs are a proactive approach that results in reduced costs for both OSHA and the participating employers. Can you explain to our Subcommittee how these programs reduce costs for both OSHA and the employers?

Mr. HARPER. Thank you for your question. With the assistance programs, especially with the SGEs, we are able to have multiple people go to a site, or partner with other sites, versus having one personnel from OSHA in one area, one region, supporting thousands of sites. By helping other businesses partner with other businesses through VPP has absolutely helped partner with other sites, build that relationship, especially with the government—special government employee program.

Mr. MESSMER. Thank you. You also ran a successful VPP program, and those worksites require buy-in from all parties involved. What role does employee involvement play in a successful VPP worksite?

Mr. HARPER. Thanks again for your question. With the employee involvement one cannot get a VPP site. You cannot go through certification without having that involvement, without having that engagement from your employees. This is not built on—our safety system is not built on one person, but it is all the employees at that site, in multiple sites, so that is buy-in from everyone at that site to get everyone home safe and sound.

That is very important to the success of this program and VPP.

Mr. MESSMER. Thank you. OSHA has found significantly lower injury and illness rates among the VPP participants. Mr. Williams, would you say that that employee buy in creates a culture of safety within your organization by being a VPP participant?

Mr. WILLIAMS. Absolutely, sir. It is a culture that, as I mentioned before, safety is the core value on which every decision is made, and where employees, frontline workers, are empowered to stop work in that program.

Mr. MESSMER. Thank you. Mr. Williams, critics of VPP will claim that by passing H.R. 2844, we will take away from OSHA's ability to enforce safety standards, keep workers safe, even though legislation dedicates—this legislation dedicates 5 percent of OSHA's annual funds to continuation of the program. What would you say in response to that claim?

Mr. WILLIAMS. I would look at it from the standpoint of VPP funding alone, we know that that number is significantly lower. It is less than 1 percent of OSHA's overall budget at present. That 5 percent number represents growth in the program that we know has been successful, and I would relate that as well from the standpoint of we look toward what VPP accomplishes in the scheme of—we talk about enforcement, enforcement will always have a need within OSHA and will always be part of its core mission.

Enforcement results in an inspection that may be on a site one, two, 3 days. The other 362 years ago, what compliance assistance programs like VPP tackled. It is creating that environment, the conditions and the culture at a worksite, so that employees are empowered to work safe, empowered to own the program, management commits to that, and the regulatory oversight as the other witnesses have talked about from their personal perspectives, is the fact that there is no self-evaluation in that audit.

A VPP site is going to see OSHA on their site every three to 5 years. They openly welcome them.

Mr. MESSMER. Okay. Thank you. I yield back the rest of my time.

Chairman MACKENZIE. Thank you. Next, we will go to Ms. Stevens from Michigan.

Ms. STEVENS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our Ranking Member as well, and of course our witnesses. We all know that OSHA plays an incredibly vital role in making sure Americans across the country are safe at work. As a daughter of a small business owner who was a landscaper, and employed a lot of people, we know a thing or two about workplace safety in my family.

As someone who has visited over 200 manufacturers in my time in Congress, through my Manufacturing Monday Program, I see those safety standards in play. I want to focus my questions certainly on Michigan, but I also just do not want to leave out the assault on our Federal workforce, and decades of underfunding at

OSHA, that has been mentioned, that leave workers more exposed than ever.

That combined with catastrophic Medicaid cuts in the Reconciliation Bill that came down, makes it very difficult for workers at this time, and particularly for folks who I hear from a lot in Michigan. An AFL-CIO report found that OSHA has just \$3.92 per worker that it is responsible for protecting, and that is down from \$6.36 in 1991.

The number of OSHA inspectors per million workers has fallen from 9.7 to 6.1, so Ms. Reindel, you served at OSHA, you mentioned that, how does this consistent and worsening under-resourcing of the agency that leaves workers exposed to increased safety risks on the job?

Ms. REINDEL. Sure. You know, the—I think in short, just to say, that you have the fox guarding the hen house, right? You have fewer inspections, fewer presence in the—lesser presence in the workplace by OSHA by an independent—by an external third party. You also do not have an avenue for workers to reach out to an external party. We know there is a lot of fear right now in the U.S. generally speaking, and without the ability for OSHA to show up and to talk to workers, this has a severe, dampening effect on how we actually can measure what is going on.

I also want to say that enforcement has been effectively evaluated by many studies to look at OSHA enforcement and OSHA standards, and how those have saved lives, and been effective, and actually greater than the standards even predict, so we have effectiveness of OSHA enforcement that's been shown through many, many studies.

I think a lot of my colleagues are talking about VPP. This program still has not been critically evaluated, and where it has there have been big problems with those evaluations to show that they are actually effective. What we really want to do is, you know, make sure employers are following the law.

Ms. STEVENS. Yes, and how about attraction, so when we think about growing our manufacturing sector we also need to think about the talent that we are bringing in. I am curious if we are—when we are ripping away regulatory frameworks, and the things that protect people on the job, if it is going to make it easier or harder to attract the talent?

Ms. REINDEL. Sure. I know there is definitely an emphasis on domestic manufacturing, but how do you do that if workplaces are not safe? I think that, you know, we have also heard today about OSHA being a critical part of the VPP Program. I will say there are a lot of onsite consultation programs and industry partnerships and resources, and compliance assistance are all very important, but OSHA and VPP actually does not do audits, until once every three to 5 years, so that is a long time.

Ms. STEVENS. Yes. One other quick one as well, when you talk about the valuable role that NIOSH plays in keeping workers safe, and what American workers will miss out on, how does this upheaval affect that?

Ms. REINDEL. NIOSH is really our major—our only source in the government for critical research on health and safety issues. It also already has a lot of industry partnerships, a lot of academic part-

nerships, real implementation on the ground of preventing workplace injuries and illnesses practically in real time, and also conducting surveillance, so we actually know what is going on in workplaces throughout the states.

Ms. STEVENS. Well, thank you so much, and I yield back my time.

Chairman MACKENZIE. Thank you. Next, we are going to go to Mr. Fine from Florida.

Mr. FINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to all of you for being here to talk about this important topic. Obviously, we want to make sure that all of our workers are safe and do not get injured, or even worse, get killed. I have a couple questions. I am going to start with Mr. Sell.

The argument in favor of compliance assistance programs is that it reduces costs by seeking to prevent injuries and accidents, as opposed to dealing with them afterwards. There may also be additional cost savings as well, and that is where I am. How can we do things cheaper.

How do OSHA's compliance assistance programs reduce the compliance burden for employers?

Mr. SELL. That is a great question. Thank you for that. The compliance assistance specialist acting in a non-enforcement capacity can actually work with every employer. It really benefits small employers that do not have those types of resources, but every employer is entitled to that service.

Whether it is program development risk assessment or just trying to figure it out what is the best way to protect your employees from a particular risk. That is where they come into play. That is where they have the expertise. Where they save money, quite frankly to a business, is the output of that.

If they are helping the employer on the front end, then there is no risk, or there is reduced risk on the back end. You also see that come through, at least in my opinion, you have a greater reduction to capacity of your worker's comp insurance, which is based on hours worked.

Your general liability goes down, so the company becomes better financially because that compliance assistance specialist in fact is saving them money. They also, if they are working in that partnership, and this is an indirect output, employers want employees to work for them, and employees, especially, America's workers, want to work for employers of choice.

They want to go somewhere where they are protected and treated well, and a compliance assistance specialist helps that because they see them there, and they know the employer cares.

Mr. FINE. Okay. Well, thank you for that. My next question is for Mr. Williams. Mr. Williams, your written testimony expresses support for H.R. 2844, the Michael Enzi Voluntary Protection Program Act. This bill would require OSHA to dedicate 5 percent of its annual budget to funding the VPP.

A version of this bill has been introduced in previous Congresses, long before I got here, but so that is why I want to know. What were past concerns with this legislation, and how does H.R. 2844 address those concerns?

Mr. WILLIAMS. Thank you for the question. I will touch on a couple potential issues that may have been stumbling blocks in previous sessions. First and foremost is that it is in the language from a funding standpoint in previous versions, the legislation would have been considered open ended.

I think there is some concern from both parties that it was a blank check, and carte blanche from the Secretary of Labor, whoever that may be at any given time to fund as much or as little or VPP like systems. I think that 5 percent rider addresses that, whether OSHA's budget is 500 million or 50 million, it would still be 5 percent of the amount.

Second, would be that I think in looking from the standpoint we talked of that budget number, and if there has also been a misconception that the program is pro one party or the other, pro-labor, pro non-labor and non-union. I think this legislation in the past has suffered from that misconception that one side or the other supports it.

It is a bill for everyone. It is a bill that has had bipartisan support in previous sessions, including this one. It is a simple piece of legislation. It aims to make a program that has been so successful reducing workplace injury and illnesses, and engaging employees in workplace safety and health. It simply makes it better. I think there has been a little bit of misconception from the standpoint of one side, or the other is going to get a victory here.

This is a victory for all of American workers.

Mr. FINE. Thank you. Thank you all for being here, and that answers my questions. I yield back Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MACKENZIE. Thank you. Next, we will go to the Ranking Member of the Full Committee, Mr. Scott from Virginia.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ms. Reindel, the Department of Labor released dozens of new rule notices, which reverse worker protections. Can you describe and comment on some of those initiatives?

Ms. REINDEL. Sure. Thank you for the question. I am happy to just—I mentioned in my testimony just before the Fourth of July, dozens of these rules—actions, I should say, were issued.

Many are proposals, and there are, you know, most of them are attempts to weaken existing safety and health protections, and also to roll back some altogether, so very basic, but very important items like adequate lighting in workplaces, or using, you know, safety colors to detect, you know, caution, you know, very important things.

There are—there is a proposal to remove OSHA's general duty protections to certain occupations because they are "inherently risky," and we see this as problematic, and really a problem for many workers across the U.S., not just the occupations that they named in the proposal, but setting a precedent for doing that going forward, and thinking that, you know, employees somehow should assume the risk in their workplaces. That is where employers should be controlling hazards.

One other area is going after the respiratory protection requirements, and we know that in order for respirators and other PPE to work properly in workplaces, and protect workers, it must fit,

and we must medically evaluate people in order to ensure that they are safe when they are wearing those protections.

Mr. SCOTT. Are independent contractors covered by OSHA?

Ms. REINDEL. Independent contractors are not covered.

Mr. SCOTT. You responded to a question about the relatively low penalties to businesses. Usually, accountability can be achieved by lawsuits, but if an employee is covered by OSHA, covered by workers' comp, is it true they cannot sue for negligence?

Ms. REINDEL. Yes, under OSHA law there is no private right of action. Workers do not have other recourse.

Mr. SCOTT. In the voluntary plans, what should we look for to ensure that the plans are actually working as intended?

Ms. REINDEL. Right. These voluntary—so, I will just say the compliance assistance has many types of programs at OSHA. I know we are talking a lot about VPP today, and that is just one of the programs. Onsite consultation is already a program that exists for small businesses, and that is a free and a confidential service that OSHA already offers to small businesses.

VPP tends to benefit large corporations. Those are employers that are already paying attention to safety because they have to do that in order to get into the program. They have to have low injury and illness rates to maintain to stay in their program, and where we have seen pressure to maintain low injury and illness rates, we also see policies and pressure for workers to not raise and report injuries and illnesses.

There is also a significant problem of every VPP employer having inspection exemptions, so for voluntary programs we should not be exempting OSHA from having inspections. It is sort of a backward way of thinking. If you are doing your best, and you are having the best employers who should be going above and beyond OSHA standards, they should pass inspections without problem, but we do have—we have seen many willful violations and fatalities at VPP sites—

I am not saying all, and I am not saying that there are not, you know, good VPP programs in some workplaces with some employers, but the problem systematically, or the program systematically has problems.

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. Williams, how can we be confident that violations are actually reported, and can that be legally enforced?

Mr. WILLIAMS. Absolutely Mr. Scott, I would address the concern about the program inspection exemption with this. VPP does not exempt sites, the program does not exempt sites from inspections for imminent dangers, from whistleblower actions, so VPP sites are still required, and are still subject to those inspections.

From a validation standpoint, I would also like to mention that VPP—the GAO, issued a report in 2009 that offered up recommendations to improve the program from an internal standpoint at OSHA.

I do want to thank previous Secretary of Labor Dr. Michaels and Assistant Secretary Jordan Barab, because under their watch they implemented the changes that GAO recommended to improve and strengthen the program, and so I want to thank them for their support of VPP, and also for making the program better and validating that it is successful.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MACKENZIE. Thank you. Next, we will go to Mr. Grothman from Wisconsin.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you. Give Andrew your expertise. In your written testimony, you say at the 150 Cintas sites are currently participating in the Voluntary Protection Program, making you the largest VPP participant by total number of worksites. Can you share any data or success stories showing how VPP has helped reduce injuries?

Mr. HARPER. Yes, sir. Thank you for your question. The VPP Program has tremendously helped Cintas in improving their employee engagement, their culture, and making sure everyone returns home safe at the end of the day.

Building more of a great system that we have, our health and safety management system together, not just with one person, or one department, but with all employees there reduced our instant rates, as well as helped with partnering with other businesses outside of Cintas to help with our best practice of being able to implement within our four walls.

It is rare that the answer is found just within our four walls, so partnering with other successful companies with great management systems has been a benefit for us.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Oh, just a plus, plus, plus. Okay. Mr. Sell, do you have anything to add to that or your experience?

Mr. SELL. Well, certainly from the construction application since 2001 it has been extremely helpful because you know in construction we have our own set of issues, so it has addressed a lot of issues that we have had over the years with respect to working with OSHA. It has always been our desire to do that, and VPP has enabled that.

I would like to add just kind of off topic for a second, we were talking about compliance assistance specialists, and I think it is good to know if just using Region 5, there is only four compliance assistance specialists, one in Ohio, three in Illinois, which also means none in Wisconsin, and I wish Ms. Stevens would still be here. It means there is none in Michigan either.

There is a severe lack of that that we are not reaching out and partnering with employees, employers. Thank you.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Okay. I guess you kind of brought this up, but I will followup with a question anyway. How could OSHA better support industry-led safety initiatives and partnerships, rather than pursuing policies that appear more focused on headlines than really improving safety?

Mr. SELL. Well, that is a great question, and it seems to be the hot topic currently. Clearly——

Mr. GROTHMAN. New day, new day.

Mr. SELL. Love it. Certainly the 5 percent funding of Voluntary Protection Programs will be a step in the right direction, as well as getting these area offices their compliance assistance specialists back, so they can work with the people that want to improve health and safety in the lives of their workers and enable the businesses to grow.

You know, we are all trying to grow in a way that is healthy, safe and smart, to provide workers, you know, a quality of life, and to provide this great country with a future.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Okay. Mr. Williams, I will finish up with you. Could you tell us how VPP helps your business improve safety without the threat of penalties or adversarial enforcement?

Mr. WILLIAMS. I can certainly speak from the perspective of our 1,400 members of which more than half are current VPP sites. It is quite frankly a culture change. I come from a construction background, a construction kid, grew up with the industry, and my dad was a contractor.

I have seen firsthand 30–40 years ago, when I was much younger and not gray, what safety culture was back in—I will call them the old days, the bad, old days. What VPP has from an effect standpoint is increased that change in culture, where we move from there's acceptable risks to, we will not perform a task if it is not completely safe.

We will work with our employees. We will ask our frontline workers what they need to function safely, to go home at the end of the day in the same or better condition in which they arrived. That culture change is a direct result of VPP, and the stringent requirements not just from the application and certification process, but every year at the annual self-evaluation.

Every three to 5 years, with that audit when OSHA comes on that site with their SGEs, and they will pick apart that site, and our VPP sites, our members welcome that, they want that because that is an outside third-party audit that they are going to gain a better perspective than what they see on their own.

There is that compliance portion of it, and the direct positive effect, not just from a business standpoint because safety pays, VPP works and saves, but also from an employee morale standpoint, and an employee well-being standpoint.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Can you give us an example of some of the negative grandstanding that you may have gotten in the past from OSHA, or that you are familiar with?

Mr. WILLIAMS. I can tell you that there has been threats to the program from the standpoint of—it is usually from the enforcement. As I said earlier before, enforcement is always going to be a core function for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. When you look at enforcement, and comments here today we have heard some of them.

Enforcement inspections are similar to a speeding ticket. Police officer pulls you over, gives you the ticket, you go on your way. The short-term impact is very positive. You are most likely going to get a good look at—you are not going to speed, but over time you regress to going back over the speed limit, you are creating that hazard.

Compliance assistance, education, from a speeding ticket standpoint going to a driver's ed course or remedial course to talk about the impact that someone speeding has on a victim of an accident that is caused by speeding, for example. The similar comparison with VPP compliance assistance. Compliance assistance goes over those other 363 days when the Inspector is not onsite and helps make that site safer.

It is that long-term education and value component that prevents that fatality, prevents that catastrophic injury.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Okay. Thank you.

Chairman MACKENZIE. Thank you. That concludes questioning from members, and I want to thank all the members for participating today. With that, we are going to go to closing remarks, and I would like to recognize the Ranking Member for her closing statement.

Ms. OMAR. Thank you Chairman and thank you once again to all of our witnesses for speaking with us today. Today's discussion has made one thing abundantly clear. The future of workplace safety depends not on weakening protections, but on strengthening partnerships between OSHA, employers, and workers.

Compliance assistance should be about empowering everyone to work together to identify hazards before they cause harm and not about providing loopholes that allow dangerous conditions to persist. We have seen—what we have seen from the Trump administration is a systematic effort to deregulate, defund and dismantle the very institutions that keep workers safe.

The human cost of this deregulatory agenda will be devastating. From slashing capacity at NIOSH, to gutting OSHA enforcement, to zeroing out the Chemical Safety Board, this administration's reckless decisions would lead to more deaths, more injuries, and more families broken by preventable tragedies.

We need strong enforceable standards, not voluntary programs that lack accountability or budget and staffing cuts that risk more worker lives. Good employers understand that safety is both a moral duty, and an essential for business success.

The bills introduced by Ranking Member Scott, myself, and some of my other colleagues, like the Protecting American Workers Act, and the Heat Illness Prevention Act, offer practical solutions to close coverage gaps and strengthen enforcement, and address deadly risks like heat stress.

As we conclude, I urge all members of this Committee to remember the stakes. Every regulation we weaken, every resource we cut, means more workers at risk of injury or death. Every worker deserves to return home safe and healthy, regardless of the industry or job.

Let us commit to building safer workplace through robust standards, effective enforcement, and stronger partnerships, because no worker's life should ever be threatened as expendable. Thank you, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Chairman MACKENZIE. Thank you. I would like to thank all of our witnesses for joining us here today for this important conversation about ways that we can keep workers safe in their workplaces. Voluntarily Protection Programs can be one important component of workplace safety, and we heard in the testimony today about how we can actually prevent accidents before they occur by creating that culture for safety that exists throughout the entire year for workers, not just a snapshot in time when an enforcement official shows up for OSHA for a day or 2 days, and they get to see and experience what is going on in that workplace.

I think again, we all want to have that preventative maintenance going on, that preventative safety, and I think Voluntary Protec-

tion Programs help aid and assist workers in having that culture of safety in their workplaces. We also had a broader discussion about the reforms that are going on at the Department of Labor.

I think they are critically important because I think we saw during the last administration, the absolute failings of the Biden administration and democrats to hold them accountable for workplace safety. We saw that during the last administration in the spike of child labor violations that went on around this country, 100fold increases, multiple 100fold increases in child violations.

All the regulations that they want to talk about, all the people that were at the Department of Labor during the last administration, they did nothing to keep children in this country safe. Absolutely nothing. To sit here and say that we need no reforms and no changes is absolutely absurd.

We want to work hand in hand with the Trump administration to make sure that we are keeping workers safe in all environments, and that is what we are going to do. The administration is making critical reforms that are so important, and we are going to work with them as a legislative body to make sure that workers across this country are kept safe.

Again, I cannot believe that we sit here and hear from the other side about how they want to keep workers safe in this country when they did nothing for years to keep those children safe in their workplaces. Absolutely nothing. That is an outrage, and it should be on the record that they did nothing. They said nothing, and now they want to sit here and try to take the moral high ground for workers.

Absolutely absurd. With that, I would again like to thank our witnesses for being here today, I look forward to working with all of you, and everybody across the aisle in a bipartisan fashion, to find ways that we can keep workers safe in this country, whether it is in a voluntary fashion, or in a regulatory fashion. We all share that same goal, and I want to thank you again for being here. With that, this meeting is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:29 a.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

[Additional submissions from Chairman Mackenzie follows:]



July 16, 2025

The Honorable Ryan Mackenzie
Chair
Subcommittee on Workforce Protections
House Education and the Workforce Committee
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Mackenzie:

On behalf of the National Retail Federation (NRF), I thank you for today's hearing titled "Safe Workplaces, Stronger Partnerships: The Future of OSHA Compliance Assistance." Retailers prioritize workplace safety. Enhanced efforts by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to increase compliance assistance would be beneficial to retailers' work to ensure safe working conditions at stores and distribution centers nationwide.

The National Retail Federation passionately advocates for the people, brands, policies and ideas that help retail succeed. From its headquarters in Washington, D.C., NRF empowers the industry that powers the economy. Retail is the nation's largest private-sector employer, contributing \$3.9 trillion to annual GDP and supporting one in four U.S. jobs — 52 million working Americans. For over a century, NRF has been a voice for every retailer and every retail job, educating, inspiring, and communicating the powerful impact retail has on local communities and global economies.

In recent years, OSHA has allocated significant resources to investigations within the retail industry's warehousing and distribution centers, despite data indicating that efforts may be more effectively directed elsewhere. During the past year, OSHA has frequently inspected warehousing and distribution center employers, occasionally conducting multiple reviews of the same facility, even where prior inspections did not reveal violations. OSHA's own data indicates that this strategy may not be optimal, as the data identifies higher hazards in sectors outside of warehousing and distribution, demonstrating that greater risks to worker safety exist in other industries. Yet, despite this reality, OSHA conducts inspections against warehousing and storage at an alarming rate. From October 2021 to September 2022, the industry was the *second* most targeted industry, despite the data described above showing other industries warrant more attention. There is a clear disconnect between what the agency does and what the agency's own data suggests it ought to do.

The Trump Administration can and should take a different approach. The complexity of federal regulations can pose significant challenges for employers, particularly small and mid-sized businesses. Expanding compliance assistance initiatives would promote a more proactive

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National Retail Federation
July 16, 2025
Page 2

approach to hazard prevention by equipping employers with clearer guidance, practical tools, and industry-specific resources. This would not only foster a stronger culture of safety but also encourage adherence to regulations before violations occur, reducing both the human and financial costs associated with workplace incidents.

Moreover, increasing compliance assistance would strengthen OSHA's collaborative relationship with the private sector. When employers view the agency as a supportive partner rather than solely an enforcement body, trust and transparency improve. Accordingly, OSHA can extend its reach, improve understanding of its numerous technical regulations, and drive long-term improvements in workplace conditions nationwide.

Thank you for your attention to this issue. We respectfully request that this letter be made part of the official record of today's hearing.

Sincerely,



David French
Executive Vice President
Government Relations

