



Missing from the Headlines:

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

Workers' Rights

1 Eliminating a million workers' union rights.

On March 27, 2025, the president carried out the biggest union-busting action in our nation's history when he eliminated the collective bargaining rights of 75 percent of the federal workforce – that's nearly a million people.¹ This unprecedented overreach has implications that reverberate beyond the federal workforce, signaling that union-busting is supported by the highest office in the land. In December 2025, all Democrats plus 20 Republicans in the House of Representatives joined together to pass a bill that would restore those rights, but that bill remains stuck in the Senate.²

2 Undermining the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

The NLRB safeguards our right to organize and collectively bargain, making decisions in cases involving disputes between workers and employers. During the president's first term, we saw a continual weakening of workers' rights at the hands of the NLRB and its general counsel, Peter Robb. That reversed in 2021 as new appointees returned balance to the board.^{3,4,5} We have again seen a sharp swing in the Board' direction under the current administration.

Extraordinary attack. While it is not uncommon to replace general counsels, the president also took the unprecedented and likely illegal step of firing Gwynne Wilcox, a sitting board member. This has never occurred in the 90-year history of the agency. Wilcox remains sidelined. Without Wilcox on the Board, the NLRB lacked a quorum for 10 months last year, meaning it could not accept, hear, or decide cases, leaving many workers in limbo.

Anti-worker direction. In December 2025, two conservative Board members, Scott Mayer and James Murphy, were appointed, restoring the quorum and allowing the Board to operate as normal again. In January, Crystal Stowe Carey was appointed as General Counsel. As a testament to the new leaning of the Board, both Carey and Mayer were past partners at Morgan Lewis, one of our nation's most notorious union-busting law firms.⁶ In April, the President proposed to re-nominate David Prouty, the one Democrat currently on the Board and nominate a new Republican, James Macy. If both nominees are confirmed, it would give the conservative majority a 3-1 voting advantage, allowing them to overturn pro-worker precedents (which is something they are very unlikely to do with only a 2-1 advantage).

3 Pushing to eliminate a key union dispute resolution tool.

The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) is a small but important federal agency that helps bring labor and management together when problems arise. Many USW contracts include utilizing FMCS when disputes occur. The administration made drastic cuts to staff in 2025, but had to backtrack following series of court actions. Since then, they have proposed eliminating the agency during each federal budget process – though Congress has rejected the push to date. Eliminating FMCS will mean longer and drawn-out contract negotiations, delays in implementing new union contracts, and the likelihood of more strikes and lockouts.^{7,8,9}

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

² U.S. House Roll Call Vote, *Protecting America's Workforce Act*, December 11, 2025.

³ Bloomberg Law, *Biden Moves to Oust Top Labor Board Attorney Peter Robb*, January 20, 2021.

⁴ In These Times, *Jennifer Abruzzo, the NLRB's General Counsel, Is Labor's Best Legal Friend*, September 27, 2021.

⁵ Economic Policy Institute, *The Biden Board: How President Biden's NLRB appointees are restoring and supporting workers' rights*, 2024.

⁶ AFL-CIO, *Letter Opposing the Nominations of Carey, Mayer, Murphy & Palmieri*, October 9, 2026.

⁷ The Guardian, *Doge shatters federal workplace mediator agency after Trump order*, March 26, 2025.

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

⁹ Economic Policy Institute, *The Trump administration's short-sighted attacks on the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service*, March 2, 2026.

Retirement Security & Healthcare

4 Threatening Social Security.

Over 11,000 Americans turn 65 each day. For the vast majority of Americans, Social Security will play a key role in making ends meet in retirement.¹⁰ The administration closed many field offices that seniors rely on for help, and they also fired 7,000 people from the agency's already understaffed workforce. The result has been longer wait times, office closures, and a major strain on remaining staff.¹¹

5 Gutting Medicaid.

Passed last July, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) used massive cuts to Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act, and other safety net programs to partially offset steep tax breaks skewed to the wealthiest and corporations. Estimates from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) suggest that total health care cuts through OBBBA were more than \$1 trillion. The actions represent the largest rollback of federal support to healthcare in American history. CBO further found that roughly 15 million Americans are expected to lose health insurance as a result.¹² The AFL-CIO ran an analysis on the bill's outcomes and found that as hospitals and other care providers attempt to recoup costs of the growing number of uninsured, those with job-based insurance will likely see cost shifts to them – as high as \$485 extra a year per person.¹³

6 Sacrificing veterans' care.

While veterans are 6.1 percent of the U.S. population, they are 30 percent of the federal workforce, making them disproportionately impacted by the administration's job elimination efforts. The administration announced in March 2026 that it would eliminate 80,000 jobs from the already-understaffed Veterans Administration. Following vocal opposition from unions, veterans' groups and others, the goal was revised to 30,000 jobs. While lowered, critical concerns remain for the delivery of care at an already-understaffed agency with increasingly growing demands.¹⁴

7 Harming critical medical research.

The National Institute of Health (NIH) is the world's leading institution to conduct and fund medical research on enhancing health, lengthening life, and reducing illness and disability. In addition to the research done directly at NIH, scientists across the country can conduct life-altering research through grants. Over 1,200 people at NIH have been fired under the current administration, from lab managers to scientists to administrative staff. Meanwhile, the NIH has cut grants for critical research across the country, impacting future health outcomes and local economies. USW members at the University of Pittsburgh, which is one of the largest recipients of NIH funding, felt the sting. Fortunately, thanks to a strong fight, favorable court rulings, and a Congress willing to override the president's budget cuts, funding remains largely stable – for now.¹⁵

Workplace Safety & Health

8 Harming the agencies that support us on the job.

Workforce cuts, along with office closures, at OSHA, the Mine Safety and Health Administration, and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health will hinder our members' ability to properly address everything from workplace health and safety complaints to whistleblower protections, to workplace research into health hazard concerns. These agencies need more staffing, not less. For example, it would take OSHA 185 years for inspectors to visit every workplace just once, and that estimate is from BEFORE last year's staffing cuts began.¹⁶ The

¹⁰ Yahoo Finance, *How Many People are Retiring Every Year for the Next Four Years?*, April 24, 2024.

¹¹ Federal News Network, *How the DOGE-driven reductions at the Social Security Administration are playing out now*, July 28, 2025.

¹² Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *By the Numbers*, August 27, 2025.

¹³ AFL-CIO, *Higher Costs and Less Care for Families with Job-Based Health Insurance*, June 17, 2025.

¹⁴ Newsweek, *VA Announces Major Staff Changes: What to Know*, July 8, 2025.

¹⁵ Tribune-Review, *Billions in research funding survive Trump crackdown, benefiting Pitt, CMU*, April 10, 2026.

¹⁶ Confined Space, *OSHA Update: All Quiet Now, But DOGE is Coming*, March 21, 2025.

administration repeatedly proposes to eliminate government agencies like the Chemical Safety Board (CSB), which has played a key role in USW facilities when major chemical incidents and fatalities occur. CSB investigates an incident, then the information is used to protect workers in the future. CSB-produced videos are used widely in USW represented workplaces. Thanks to push back from our union and others, the CSB remains intact currently¹⁷; however, the administration has once again sought to eliminate all funding for the CSB in its budget request this year.¹⁸

9 Endangering safety and health gains for USW members.

More than 5,000 workers in the U.S. are killed on the job each year – including roughly 30 fatalities annually in USW workplaces – while an additional 135,000 people die of occupational disease.^{19,20} When laws to protect workers' health and safety become outdated, government agencies can – but don't always – add new scientific, economic or industry expertise to update them through the rulemaking process, resulting in new standards (a.k.a. regulations or rules).

The gains. In recent years, our union celebrated new standards that will protect workers in mining from silica exposure, address unsafe staffing levels in long-term care facilities, expand rights for workers to choose who will represent them during safety investigations, and ban ongoing uses of asbestos to protect people from cancer.^{21,22,23,24,25} In a win for USW members in oil refineries, chemical plants, and other workplaces utilizing significant volumes of chemicals, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) updated their enforcement manual for process safety management for the first time since 1994.²⁶ Additionally for our oil and petrochemical workers, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a strong, pro-worker Risk Management Program (RMP) standard in 2024. Other priorities were advancing in the rulemaking process, including a proposed rule on workplace heat exposure.²⁷

The rollbacks. The current administration issued an executive order on January 31, 2025, to deregulate government rulemaking. It holds that “for each new regulation issued, at least 10 prior regulations be identified for elimination.”²⁸ Rules that aren't final – like workplace heat exposure – are not expected to advance, and the implementation of others that are final – like those previously mentioned – may not be implemented on their timelines or simply not enforced as a way to derail them.

We have already seen the significant impacts of this executive order: in December 2025, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced it would rescind the safe staffing provisions for long-term care facilities.²⁹ In March 2026, EPA said it was going to reconsider the RMP rule, and it put forward a much weaker, more pro-industry proposal.³⁰ And then in early April, federal regulators quietly delayed the implementation of the new silica rule for miners. This rule was designed to protect workers – including many USW members – from high levels of silica dust, which is a significant contributor to black lung disease and silicosis. Both are incurable respiratory illnesses caused by breathing in toxic dust.³¹ All of these deregulatory rollbacks make workers less safe on the job.

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

¹⁸ U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board, *Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Request*, March 25, 2027.

¹⁹ USW Health, Safety and Environment Department, *International Executive Board Report*, March, 2025.

²⁰ AFL-CIO, *Death on the Job: The Toll of Neglect, 2024*, April 23, 2024.

²¹ USW Press Release, *USW Applauds MSHA Update on Workplace Silica Standards*, April 16, 2024.

²² Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, *Minimum Staffing Final Rule*, April 22, 2024.

²³ USW Blog, *Empowering the Caregivers*, September 14, 2023.

²⁴ USW Press Release, *USW Applauds Final OSHA Rule on Workplace Safety and Health Investigations*, March 29, 2024.

²⁵ Environmental Protection Agency, *Biden-Harris Administration finalizes ban on ongoing use of asbestos to protect people from cancer*, March 18, 2024.

²⁶ Bloomberg Law, *OSHA Issues Major Chemical Safety Enforcement Guide Changes*, January 29, 2024.

²⁷ USW Press Release, *USW Welcomes Life-Saving OSHA Heat Standard*, July 2, 2024.

²⁸ The White House, *Unleashing Prosperity Through Deregulation*, January 31, 2025.

²⁹ Federal Register, *Medicare and Medicaid Programs: Repeal of Minimum Staffing Standards for Long-Term Care Facilities*, December 3, 2025.

³⁰ Environmental Protection Agency, *EPA Announces Reconsideration of the Risk Management Plan to Boost Safety, Competitiveness of American Businesses*, March 12, 2025.

³¹ BlueGreen Alliance, *The Trump Administration Quietly Delays the Silica Rule, Continuing to Expose Miners to Toxic Dust*, April 10, 2026.

Trade and Job Security

10 Tracking unpredictable trade actions.

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

However, we have met a moment of deep concern as the president uses tariffs to go after longstanding trading partners and friends like Canada. Per former USW President Dave McCall, "Canada is not the problem. Indeed, Canada has taken steps to coordinate their trade policies with the U.S. to respond to unfair foreign trade, and applying across-the-board tariffs ultimately hurts workers on both sides of the border."³²

11 Derailing industrial policy.

Since at least the 1970s, our union has argued for a comprehensive strategy to support U.S. manufacturing. In the past few years, we were able to secure laws that encouraged domestic production, started rebuilding U.S. supply chains and helped industries invest for the future – all while supporting good, union jobs. In particular, last year's budget law rolled back many of these industrial gains that were in the Inflation Reduction Act.³³ Also last year, the Department of Energy made matters worse by cancelling funding for more than 200 projects, including several USW employers' projects.^{34,35}

Economic Concerns

12 Giving more power to the wealthiest and their corporations.

In early 2025, sources at the IRS reported they were drafting plans to cut roughly half of the 100,000 jobs within the agency. While the number has fluctuated, as of last summer, they had already reduced the workforce by 25% with more to come. Experts are concerned about the agency's future ability to crack down on wealthy Americans and corporations who are skirting federal tax laws given that they require more intensive manual work versus automated software reviews. Evidence has already found that tax enforcement has weakened in the wake of these staffing cuts.³⁶ Overall services – from getting questions answered to receiving timely returns – are also expected to suffer.³⁷

Last year's One Big Beautiful Bill scored more wins for the wealthiest, with \$4.5 trillion in tax cuts skewed to the wealthiest households and sweeping cuts to programs that help people with low and moderate incomes.³⁸ While that bill also included some pro-worker tax cuts (e.g., no tax on tips, no tax on overtime, etc.), those provisions were temporary and will phase out in a few years, whereas the tax cuts to the wealthiest Americans and multinational corporations are permanent.

Consumers fall further behind without watchdogs to guard our money. The administration is fixated on gutting the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), which saves Americans more than \$15 billion every year by reining in bad actors on Wall Street and in Silicon Valley.³⁹ Russell Vought, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget as well as the co-author of Project 2025, currently leads the bureau. Project 2025 called for the elimination of the CFPB.⁴⁰

Updated April 2026.

³² USW Press Release, *USW Opposes Canadian Tariffs, Welcomes Efforts to Contain Global Overcapacity*, February 10, 2025.

³³ Bloomberg News, *Trump Canceling \$3.7 Billion in Clean Energy Projects*, May 30, 2025.

³⁴ U.S. Department of Energy, *Energy Department Announces Termination of 223 Projects, Saving Over \$7.5 Billion*, October 1, 2025.

³⁵ USW Blog, *Trump Stabs Workers in the Back*, June 16, 2025.

³⁶ Reuters, *Tax enforcement weakened after Trump job cuts, IRS data shows*, April 15, 2026.

³⁷ Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, *Three Strikes Against Filers This Tax Season: IRS Cuts, No Direct File, Skewed Tax Code Changes*, April 9, 2026.

³⁸ Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, *Republican Megabill Trades Essential Support to Low-Income People for Skewed Tax Cuts*, February 11, 2026.

³⁹ ProPublica, *End for Yourself: Under Trump, Consumer Protection Bureau's Probes of Big Tech and Finance Firms Freeze Up*, March 26, 2025.

⁴⁰ Nerdwallet, *The CFPB Is Still Standing ... Barely. But Is It Doing Anything?*, January 26, 2026.