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INTERNATIONAL UNION, UNITED AUTOMOBILE, AEROSPACE & AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENT WORKERS OF AMERICA – UAW

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April 10, 2019

To:    Local Union Presidents and Recording Secretaries

Subject:      Workers' Memorial Day

Greetings,

Since 1989, the UAW has joined other unions in recognizing April 28<sup>th</sup> as Workers' Memorial Day. On this day in 1971, Congress enacted the Occupational Safety and Health Act with the stated goal to provide every worker with the right to a safe and healthy workplace.

We have a long way to go to reach this goal. Today, more than ever, UAW members play a critical role in advocating for safer work sites and higher safety standards at the federal and state level. We must remain vigilant and united in our efforts as we are being challenged with ever-increasing pressures to reduce funding for health and safety research and enforcement activities. We must fight to keep long standing worker safeguards.

Our union has been in a continuous struggle to improve on these standards through advocacy and collective bargaining. With research, information, education and the efforts of unions through collective bargaining, workplace health and safety protections have been expanded. This was especially true during the Obama administration when we saw progress in the Toxic Substance Control Act, the establishment of a silica standard, beryllium protection, recordkeeping requirements, whistleblower protections and OSHA's National Emphasis Programs in polyurethanes, combustible dust, hexavalent chromium, lead and others. A severe violator enforcement program was enacted that focused on limited OSHA resources on specific hazards and high hazard industries guilty of repeat violations.

During the last two years, GOP leaders in the U.S. House and Senate have aggressively worked to roll back safety standards exposing American workers to job hazards. Shortly after taking office in January 2017, the President signed Executive Order 13771 aimed at reducing funding and eliminating regulations that safeguard America's working men and women. This anti-worker executive order mandates that "for every single new regulation issued, at least two prior regulations be identified for elimination."

Workers' rights to report unsafe conditions are threatened. UAW members have been retaliated against for talking to OSHA inspectors and have at times waited a full year for OSHA to investigate the retaliation. The mechanism to develop OSHA protection from chemical hazards has been slowed to a halt. OSHA enforcement activities are at the lowest point since 1973. Workers continue to suffer ergonomic stressors with no hope for a standard to cover two-thirds of the injuries UAW members suffer. Efforts to enforce accurate record keeping of workplace injuries have been rolled back.

GOP-led congressional reviews and anti-worker Presidential executive orders have been issued at an alarming rate. All designed to repeal long established safety and health standards, roll back funding, and reduce OSHA inspectors to dangerously low levels. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported 5,147 U.S. workers were killed on the job last year. These men and women reported to work and never returned home to their loved ones. An additional 50,000 workers die prematurely each year because of their exposure to chemical hazards on the job.

The UAW will continue to demand safe and healthy workplaces for all our sisters and brothers in every sector of industry. Through the power of collective bargaining, we will work to protect our industry leading health and safety programs while strengthening our collective voices in eliminating potential hazards.

April 28<sup>th</sup> is a day of solemn remembrance honoring those who have lost their lives in workplace tragedies and died prematurely from workplace exposures. While we mourn the loss of our brothers and sisters who never returned home at the end of their workday, we are resolute in our fight for the living by demanding continued improvements in Environmental Health and Safety at all worksites. Whether you are a member working in manufacturing, gaming, health services, education, or one of the many other sectors of our increasingly diverse union, returning home safely from work is a right we all have. As is the case with any right, we must guard it or risk losing it.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gary Jones  
President