

The Trump Administration's War on Workers and Families

In his inaugural address, Donald Trump stood before the nation and promised that every decision he makes would be to benefit American workers. But since taking office, President Trump has left a trail of broken promises, siding with wealthy corporations and Wall Street over working families at virtually every turn. He and his administration have launched initiatives to take money out of workers' paychecks, take away on-the-job protections that help workers come home healthy and safe to their families, and make it harder for workers to count on their own hard-earned retirement savings.

On October 2, 2017, the Trump administration announced its new deregulatory agenda, which is nothing more than a new coat of paint on the same old ideas that big business has been pushing for years in order to rig the rules for its own profit. But now, corporate interests have taken over the U.S. Department of Labor and other worker-focused agencies. So rather than protecting your right to be paid more for working longer hours (not to mention your right to come home safe after a long day on the job), the Department of Labor is pulling out all the stops to give the wealthiest shareholders a few more cents in short-term gains without considering the long-term well-being of our nation's workers, families, and communities.

The anti-worker efforts announced by Trump's Department of Labor include the following:

Taking Back Wages. Trump's Wage and Hour Division [launched an effort](#) to roll back the 2016 overtime rules that promised to give 4.2 million workers around the country a long-overdue raise or more time with their families. (And in a separate move that undermines pay-practice transparency, which is the first step in eliminating gender- and race-based pay gaps, the White House [halted an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission initiative](#) to collect better data on what companies pay workers by race and gender.)

Endangering Worker Safety and Health. Worker safety regulations do not kill jobs, they save jobs from killing workers. Yet Trump's Occupational Safety and Health Administration has bowed to industry pressure and [inexplicably delayed rules](#) intended to protect workers from exposure to deadly silica dust, and in an unprecedented move, proposed to strip away critical worker protections from

construction and shipyard workers to [cancer-causing beryllium](#). (Not to be outdone, Trump's Agriculture Department is also [considering, behind closed doors, an industry request](#) to increase line speeds in poultry processing plants—endangering workers and consumers alike.)

Making Retirement Less Secure. Trump's Employee Benefits Security Division has delayed key enforcement provisions of the “conflict of interest rule,” which requires retirement advisors to put their clients' interests before their own when providing retirement advice. Now the agency has [signaled its intention to delay them again](#) until mid-2019, which the [Economic Policy Institute projects](#) would cost between \$5.5 and \$16 billion for retirement savers' accounts over the next 30 years.

Stacking the Deck Against Worker Voice. Trump's Office of Labor Management Standards has [proposed eliminating the “persuader rule,”](#) a common-sense reform that gives workers a window into shadowy anti-union campaigns targeting them. Unions already operate under strict transparency rules, and rescinding the persuader rule stacks the deck even more for employers who pull out all the stops in blocking workers from exercising their right to form unions and bargain collectively. (Trump's newest National Labor Relations Board member has only recently been confirmed but, based on his record as a corporate attorney, is expected to take aim at organized workers as well.)

Protecting Large Federal Contractors Who Endanger Workers and Steal Wages. The Trump administration teamed up with congressional leadership to erase the Fair Pay and Safe Workplaces executive order, which simply required federal agencies to consider a potential contractor's record of employment law violations when deciding whether to award it a contract. This common-sense measure would have helped ensure that taxpayer dollars go to responsible contractors who are creating good jobs and respecting worker protection laws.

Denying Workers Their Day in Court. At every turn, the Trump administration [has taken steps to defend rip-off](#) “forced arbitration” clauses that deny consumers and workers alike their day in court when they have a legitimate claim against a large corporation. Today, more than half of all non-union private sector workers—and two-thirds of those employed by large corporations—are bound by these take-it-or-leave-it clauses they must agree to in order to get a job, [according to the Economic Policy Institute](#). The Trump administration wants to change the rules to make it even easier for business to take away individuals' right to have their day in court.

Workers should not be fooled by the grandiose speechifying that went on at the White House's deregulatory agenda rollout. Its rush to deregulate won't create any new jobs—it will just make the ones that already exist less safe and of a lower quality. That's not putting the American worker first; that's allowing corporate America to keep dictating the rules of the game.

For more information on any of these topics, please contact nelp@nelp.org.