

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 20, 2017

The Honorable Alexander Acosta  
Secretary  
United States Department of Labor  
200 Constitution Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20210

Dear Secretary Acosta:

We write to express our deep concern with a pattern of actions taken by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) under your direction, suggesting that the Trump Administration has adopted a cavalier attitude toward worker safety standards. Worker safety should be a top priority during your tenure as Secretary of Labor that should be demonstrated by strengthening enforcement and oversight of workplace safety standards, reversing recent actions to obscure workplace fatality data, and announcing a highly-qualified nominee to be Administrator of OSHA.

We were dismayed that the President's FY2018 Budget included the elimination of the Susan Harwood Training Grants and offered no specifics about alternative ways the Department of Labor (DOL) would continue to support workplace safety training and education. This program provides funding to nonprofit organizations to train and educate workers and employers on ways to prevent workplace accidents and hazards. According to DOL's website, 2.1 million workers have received training from this program since 1978. We will be fighting for the restoration of this grant program in any Congress-passed appropriations bill for FY2018 and we urge you to defend this effective program to raise awareness and increase prevention of workplace illness and injuries.

In addition, OSHA recently removed a list of workplace fatalities from the homepage of its website and instituted a new policy of publicly disclosing fewer fatalities, removing one of the most basic deterrents to unsafe working conditions and depriving workers and families of basic information. In 2010, OSHA posted to its website a running list of the names of workers who had died on the job in recent months, helping to inform the public about workplace fatalities in the U.S.<sup>1</sup> The list helped to remind those of us responsible for overseeing the work of the Department, as well as both workers and employers, that OSHA's mission to prevent workplace injuries, illnesses, and deaths remains both critically important and too frequently unfulfilled. Removing this list and further eliminating disclosure of workplace deaths simply because OSHA did not issue a citation will allow employers to better cover-up their workplace safety records and dodge accountability for unsafe workplaces.

Everyone should be able to go to work each day knowing they will come home each night in the same condition and without experiencing any threat to their health and safety. Recent actions taken by OSHA under your leadership call into question whether the Administration shares this goal. The failure to nominate an individual to be OSHA Administrator is further indication that worker safety is not a top priority of this Administration.

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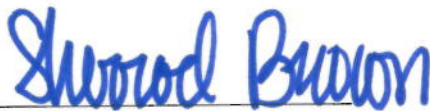
<sup>1</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20170823025608/https://www.osha.gov/>

To help us better understand the Administration's commitment to worker safety and justification of these actions, we request your responses to the following questions by October 13, 2017.

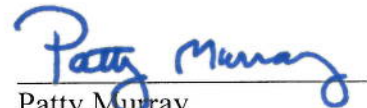
- Is it DOL's goal to reduce workplace injuries and illnesses for U.S. workers?
- Does DOL believe OSHA's enforcement of federal workplace standards is an important part of achieving this goal?
- Does DOL believe data collection and monitoring are important components to improving worker safety?
- Does the Administration believe workplace safety education is an important component of prevent workplace safety injuries and illnesses?
- What alternative methods is DOL considering for developing and distributing workplace safety training materials outside of the Harwood program?
- Who did DOL consult with in advance of removing the workplace fatality statistics from the OSHA website? Please provide information on all conversations or meetings with the business community, worker safety advocacy organizations, and any other experts or stakeholders who were consulted.
- Does DOL believe that removing certain workplace fatality statistics from OSHA's website will reduce workplace injuries and illnesses?
- Please provide any internal written justification completed in advance of the decision to remove workplace fatality statistics from the OSHA website. If no written justification was completed, please explain why not.
- Does the Administration plan to nominate an OSHA Administrator by the end of the month? If not, why not?
- Will the Administration require any OSHA Administrator nominee to have a demonstrated commitment to worker safety? If not, why not?

Thank you for your prompt response to this letter.

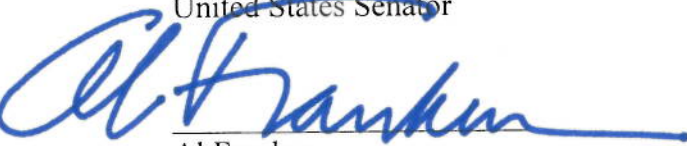
Sincerely,



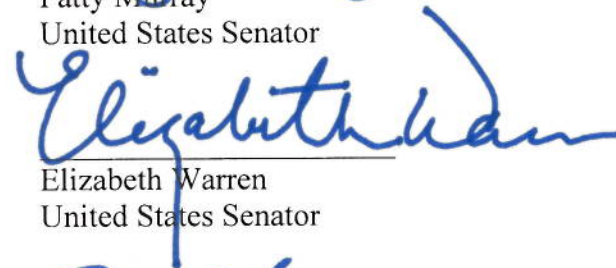
Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



Patty Murray  
United States Senator



Al Franken  
United States Senator



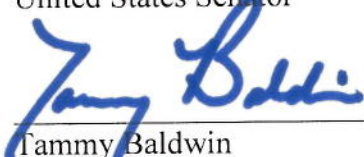
Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



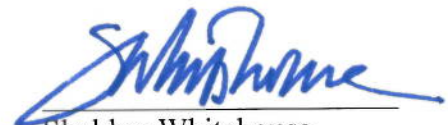
Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator