



Is the cost of safety too high?

During the last six months, you have surely read much about the war being waged against organized labor. The governor of Wisconsin's assault on the collective-bargaining rights of labor is what you most hear, and it is what has gotten all of our attention. The rights of labor and the rights of working men and women are under attack in every corner of this country.

I recently came upon an article in *Safety+Health* magazine, published by the National Safety Council. Senior Associate Editor Kyle W. Morrison highlights the differences between the GOP funding proposals for OSHA and President Obama's proposed budget for the fiscal year. In its simplest comparison, the GOP budget proposes to take a "machete" to OSHA's budget. The article quotes House Appropriations Committee Chairman Hal Rogers (R-KY) as follows:

This legislation will help stop harmful regulations, misguided laws and over-reaching bureaucracies to allow our businesses to create jobs and our economy to thrive.

Are you kidding? No, Hal Rogers was not!

The message to you as a letter carrier is to think carefully about who gets your vote. We often get sidetracked about other issues and fail to keep focus on the things that should matter most.

Our brothers and sisters on the workroom floor often vote for a candidate based on political affiliation without ever thinking how that candidate's thinking would affect us on the workroom floor. If you knew that your chosen candidate would support the GOP budget, and in so doing would wipe out safety and health regulations enforced through OSHA, would you still vote for that person? Would the loss of a loved one due to under-funding of OSHA or the obliteration of safety regulations change your mind or get your attention?

The left side of the aisle has traditionally supported labor and the needs of labor, including but not limited to safety. While there are many friends of labor on the right side, the collective body and the power brokers on the right side prefer that unions go away and that collective bargaining disappear. The right side of the aisle, as quoted above, feels that too much regulation is too costly for business. They, as stated above, do not like the law and

do not like regulations or the systems that protect working men and women. When the power brokers on the right are cornered, they pretend to care about safety, but they measure the cost of safety as too much of a burden for the business environment, especially when business bends their ear.

What is the price that should be paid for a safe work environment? Is there a dollar value that should be extracted from a complicated equation, and should that dollar value determine whether or not safety should be a factor in all decision-making?

In 1992, we elected President Clinton with a labor-friendly majority in both houses. During his first two years, Hatch Act reform was passed and signed into law. The Family and Medical Leave Act was also passed and signed into law. In the November 1994 midterm elections, the right side of the aisle took over Congress. President Clinton no longer had his party in power. No labor-friendly bills were passed and the rights of labor were stifled.

In 2008, we elected President Obama, and added friends of labor to the halls of Congress. During the first years of his administration, safety issues at OSHA were being funded and OSHA began to work hard toward providing a safer America for the men and women that labor for a living. He appointed Hilda Solis as the Secretary of Labor. She has been a friend through her career and through her role as the Secretary of Labor she has championed our causes. Elect the right president and we will have the right people watching out for us.

The midterm elections of November 2010 again changed the playing field. We lost more than 60 seats to the other side of the aisle. The labor-friendly party lost its power in the House. The GOP budget was passed in the House, along party lines by a vote of 235-189. Whom did you vote for?

The article mentions that Secretary Solis indicated in her testimony in February that the proposed GOP cuts would have devastating effects on workplace safety.

Next year's elections will be here before you know it. We need to take back the House, keep the Senate and protect the White House. Get involved in your union. Get educated on what matters most. 