

WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY Event Synopsis - 2019

Press Release
For Immediate Release

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Workers and Community Members Call on Area and National Leaders to Prioritize Good, Safe Jobs at Workers' Memorial Day Service

Local Working People in La Crosse Honored Those Injured or Killed on the Job and Call for Change;

(La Crosse, Wisconsin, April 28, 1pm) – Local workers from various industries and occupations including; firefighters, public sector workers, transportation workers, and community members were joined by La Crosse Mayor Tim Kabat, Western Wisconsin AFL-CIO President Tyler Tubbs, and Deb Marsolek (sister of a fallen honoree) to mourn for those who were injured or killed on the job in the Coulee Region and to commit to escalating the fight for safer jobs.

The event was part of Workers' Memorial Day, held annually on April 28. The group came together under the event's dogma, "morn for the dead and fight like hell for the living," (Mary Harris "Mother" Jones). Hundreds of events like the one in took place across the globe. Worldwide this was the 49th annual observance of Workers' Memorial Day. Since 1989 trade unions in North America have held such events.

Tubbs pointed out that, "A total of 5,147 workers died from a work-related injury in the U.S. in 2017, the highest annual figure since 2008. The fatal injury rate was 3.5 per 100,000 full-time equivalent workers, one of the highest since 2010. Furthermore there were about 170,000 recordable cases of occupational illness in 2017 and roughly 50,000 workers die annually from occupational illnesses."

"Our mourning is deep, but our commitment to fight for the living and to put an end to workplace deaths and injuries is just as deep," said Bill Brockmiller, (Treasurer AFT 4999 and WWAFLCIO). Attendees pointed out that efforts to make companies more competitive and productive have brought with them new safety and health concerns. Changes such as downsizing, increased hours and pace of work, and changes in technology and work processes are taking a huge toll on workers.

Workplace violence is the third-leading cause of death on the job, resulting in nearly 29,000 serious, lost-time injuries for workers each year. Health care and social service workers are at greatest risk of violence on the job because of their direct contact with patient and client care.

Local officials in attendance included La Crosse Mayor Tim Kabat, former mayor/former Wisconsin Assemblyperson John Medinger, La Crosse County Board Member Maureen Freedland, and Wisconsin State Senator Jennifer Shilling. American Legion Post 52's Honor Guard provided a ceremonial tribute to the fallen and an invocation was given by Rabbi Saul Prombaum of the Congregation Sons of Abraham.

The event took place at Green Island Park in La Crosse, where workers shared stories of loved ones who were killed on the job, offered personal testimonies about safety conditions, and emphasized the need to come together to address these concerns.

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