



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS  
WITH DISABILITIES**

**IMPLEMENTATION OF EFFECTIVE OSHA REGULATIONS MAY PREVENT  
DIMINISHED HEALTH AND DISABILITY**

A briefing was held by the Center for American Progress on “OSHA 40”, the 40<sup>th</sup> year of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Presenters at the forum were the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Health and Safety, representatives from industry, labor, academia and members of the labor force.

**Summary**

Forty years ago OSHA was designed to protect the health and safety of workers as a civil right. Workplace safety has improved since enactment of OSHA 40 years ago. However, there is a long ways to go to remove all obstacles to the health and safety of people in the U.S. workforce. There are injuries, and fatalities in addition to toxic chemical and environmental pollution in work environments that cause injury to members of the workforce. Thus, there is need for a change in the workplace culture that will protect worker health. Information at the forum revealed that the rules at OSHA are ossified with antiquated standards, particularly to protect worker from new toxic chemicals that may enter the work place. There are several barriers to effective workplace standards. Some of these barriers are: 1) an understaffed workforce (220 inspectors for 80,000 work places), 2) health and safety issues can not be raise in workplace 3) States have different regulations, 4) workers rely on an under funded OSHA for protection, and 5) the OSHA budget has been under funded and recently cut.

**Disability Prevention**

Four thousand workers die on the job each year and another 4 million are injured. Many of these injuries occur on low wage jobs due to musculoskeletal injuries, which can cause diminished health, and disabilities. Work related deaths are approximately 1 per 1,000. However, there are precautions through OSHA regulations that can prevent diminished health and disability. For instance, 10 000 health care workers prevented hepatitis from infected needles through precautionary measures. There are several conditions associated with workforce safety and health, which if not addressed, may contribute to disability. Some of these conditions are as follow: 1) protection against workplace chemicals. 2) a fragmented regulatory environment, 3) subcontract work in workplace safety, 4) untrained workers in safety practices, 5) inadequate health protections for pregnant women and vulnerable populations, 6) exclusion of workers from OSHA protections, 7) inadequate provisions to protect mental health disorders (i.e. the workplace is stressful and 20 million people are diagnosed with mental health disorders each year).

**Activities**

Discussions were held with panelist on inadequate protections from mental health disorders that result from participation in the workplace.

**Principle**

All people in the workplace should be protected from the adverse consequences of social determinants of health that may contribute to disability.