



CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES

UNSAFE WORK ENVIRONMENTS MAY LEAD TO DIMINISHED HEALTH AND DISABILITY

Unsafe work environments are a contributing factor to the accidents that cause approximately 400,000 workers to become disabled each year. OSHA needs to increase enforcement of current workplace safety standards by identifying emerging hazards and hiring more inspectors.

A forum was held at the Center for American Progress on “Promoting Opportunity While Protecting Worker Rights” as part of a blueprint for the 111th Congress. Presenters at the forum were economists and policy experts on domestic issues.

Summary

There are public health safety laws that need effective enforcement to provide assurance that workers are protected from unnecessary injuries. Regulatory and enforcement processes need to be reinvigorated by identifying current and emerging workplace hazards. There are approximately 160 million workers in 9 million establishments that are subject to OSHA inspection, but OSHA had planned to employ only 1,200 to 2,400 inspectors that were expected to perform 37,000 inspections in 2009. Thus, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) staff needs to be increased in order to adequately institute the statutory requirements that protect worker safety.

Disability Prevention Issues

Identification of workplace hazards to develop and enforce appropriate work safety standards should be a high priority for the Department of Labor. Failure to do so may result in diminished health that can lead to disability. Experts estimate that approximately 400,000 workers become disabled each year. Initiatives need to be taken by the legislature and regulatory agencies to make progress in preventing diminished health and disability as a part of work.

Intervention

A letter was written to the keynote speaker to comment on public health implications in the workforce associated with making America a safer place to work.

Recommendation

There should be a provision to improve worker safety in an effort to prevent diminished health and disability in the workplace.