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Trump Budget to Workers: Drop Dead



By **Jordan Barab**

JUN 2, 2025



In Washington DC, the classical way to attempt to hide bad news is to announce it late Friday afternoon. And the Trump administration never disappoints: Late Friday afternoon, the administration dumped its detailed

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FY 2026 budget proposals for OSHA, MSHA, NIOSH and the Chemical Safety Board.

If budgets are the monetary expression of an organization's values, Trump's message to workers is: Drop Dead.

The administration's budget requests that Congress impose devastating cuts in OSHA, MSHA, NIOSH as well as the elimination of the Chemical Safety Board.

(This post will address the [OSHA and MSHA budgets](#), as well as the Chemical Safety Board. A separate post will follow discussing the NIOSH mess.)

Before I get into the depressing details, remember that the President's request is only the first piece of the final puzzle: We still need to see the House and Senate budget proposals, and then what comes out in the final bill. The new fiscal year begins on October 1, although Congress has not met that deadline in almost 30 years.

As we expected, [OSHA](#) would be facing serious budget cuts under Trump's proposal (see the chart below): an 8% cut overall from FY 2025, down from a total of \$632.3 million to \$582.4 million. Staffing will be reduced from 1810 to 1587, a 12.3% reduction. All of the staff cuts are expected to come through "attrition," which seems to mean no RIFs.

“ As we expected, OSHA would be facing serious budget cuts under Trump's proposal (see the chart below): an 8% cut overall from FY 2025, down from a total of \$632.3 million to \$582.4 million.

The biggest cut, percentage-wise, comes out of Standards and Guidance: a 24% cut from an already pitifully low budget. The largest money cut was from enforcement: From \$243 million to \$219.3 million.

And as expected (and as attempted in every Republican administration since George W. Bush), the budget proposes to eliminate the [Susan Harwood Worker Training grant program](#).

Under the President's proposal, [MSHA](#) faces a 10% cut, with reductions coming in every line item, especially standards and training. MSHA staff will be reduced by 47 positions.

The only "logic" I can see behind these drastic cuts is MAGA's desire to reduce federal budgets back to their magical pre-COVID levels. This budget performs that task admirably. (Although, adjusting for inflation, OSHA's \$582 million budget in 2020 would translate to \$715 million today.)

But math, logic, law or empathy are not features of this administration.

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OSHA Budget

OSHA Enforcement

OSHA's main job is to save lives by enforcing the law: ensuring that employers comply with OSHA standards and regulations in order to reduce the killing and maiming of workers in this country. It's a huge mandate — especially considering OSHA's paltry budget: assuring the safety and health of 158 million workers at more than 11.5 million workplaces.

The enforcement section of the President's OSHA budget assures workers that "This funding will allow OSHA to continue its commitment to and emphasis on the enforcement of workplace safety and health standards and regulations."

Good to know. Until you look at the numbers: this budget request proposes cutting the federal OSHA enforcement budget by 5.3% from \$243 million to \$219.3 million. Enforcement staff will be cut from 1,292 to 1,124, a 13% cut. So where is the "commitment to and emphasis on the enforcement of workplace safety and health standards and regulations?"

It's not there.

The numbers don't lie. The Trump budget predicts that OSHA will conduct only 24,929 inspections next year. OSHA's FY 2025 budget estimated that OSHA would conduct 34,914 inspections. (We don't have final FY 2025 numbers yet.) And in FY 2024, OSHA conducted 34,682 inspections.

“ With the exception of two COVID years, and the Reinventing Government debacle of the mid-1990s, this is the lowest number of inspections in OSHA's history.

So OSHA is predicting that it will inspect almost 10,000 fewer workplaces in FY 2026 than it conducted in FY 2024 and estimated it would inspect in FY 2025. That's almost 30% fewer inspections estimated next year than the current year.

With the exception of two COVID years, and the Reinventing Government debacle of the mid '90s (there were only 24,024 inspections in FY 1995), this is the lowest number of inspections in OSHA's history. Even in the 1980s, at the height of the Reagan administration, OSHA averaged over 60,000 inspections per year. And there were many fewer workplaces and workers.

Last year, it would have taken OSHA 185 years to visit every workplace in the country just once. And next year promises to be much, much worse. Fewer inspections means less law and order in the workplace: employers will know that they will be even less likely to ever see an OSHA inspector than ever before, and more workers will likely get injured, sick and killed

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Trump's OSHA nominee, [David Keeling](#), will testify at his [confirmation hearing](#) Thursday morning before the Senate HELP committee. Unfortunately, there are three other nominees being considered at the same hearing, so it's unclear how much attention Keeling will get. But someone might want to ask Keeling how cutting over 5% of the enforcement budget, 13% of enforcement staff and almost 30% of inspections enables OSHA to "continue its commitment to and emphasis on the enforcement of workplace safety and health standards and regulations."

“ Someone might want to ask Keeling at his confirmation hearing how cutting over 5% of the enforcement budget, 13% of enforcement staff and almost 30% of inspections enables OSHA to “continue its commitment to and emphasis on the enforcement of workplace safety and health standards and regulations.”

Or maybe this: "Mr. Keeling, last year, if OSHA were to inspect each workplace in the country just once, it would take 185 years. That's close to two centuries. Under this budget, it will get much, much worse. Do you think that an OSHA inspection every two centuries is too often for workers? Is every two-and-a-half centuries better? Because that seems to be where this budget will be heading under your leadership."

(His answer will likely be: "Thank you for the question, Senator. I have not studied OSHA's budget yet, but will do so carefully if I am privileged to be confirmed.")

Labor Secretary Lori Chavez DeRemer will appear before the [House Education and Workforce Committee](#) the same day. She should be asked the same questions. And she won't be able to weasel out with the "I haven't studied the budget" excuse.

The bottom line is that shrinking government is not just about reducing employees and "bureaucrats," or combating "waste, fraud and abuse;" it means limbs severed and lives lost.

OSHA Standards and Guidance

The biggest percentage cut in OSHA's budget is from standards. At the end of the Biden administration, OSHA was actively working on a heat standard, as well as standards covering emergency response workers, workplace violence, infectious diseases, tree care and several others.

Given the hostility in this administration (and in the Republican party) toward OSHA standards, the severe cuts to OSHA's regulatory office is hardly surprising. No Republican administration since George H.W. Bush has issued a single major OSHA standard (aside from those ordered by the courts.)

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“ Given the hostility in this administration (and in the Republican party) toward OSHA standards, the severe cuts to OSHA’s regulatory office is hardly surprising. No Republican administration since George H.W. Bush has issued any major OSHA standards (aside from those ordered by the courts.)

Reading selectively from the rhetoric of the budget proposal, you might think the administration actually thinks standards and regulations have some purpose: “OSHA continually evaluates hazards and risks to the health and safety of workers. The agency identifies areas where new health and safety standards are necessary to protect workers.”

But reading further, you come to: “The agency engages in deregulatory activities as well to modernize standards in ways that allow new technologies and/or reduce the regulatory burden on employers while maintaining a high level of workplace safety and health.”

(“New technologies?” AI instead of OSHA standards?

The proof is in the pudding, and this rancid pudding eliminates a huge section of the staff from the standards office: OSHA is only requesting funding to support 48 staff, which is a decrease of 23 from FY 2025 — almost one-third of the directorate’s current staff. (Just for reference, in FY 2012, standards was budgeted for 96 staff)

Normally, the budget proposal outlines what standards will make progress in the coming year: which will have SBREFA panels and when, the predicted date for issuing a proposal, or a final standard. But in this case, “Regulatory activities are currently undergoing review as part of the change in administration.”

And tough luck if you want any specifics: “Given the multi-year rulemaking process, resources available during a given year do not necessarily translate into measurable output for that year.”

So, no output significant enough to measure? No Requests for Information? No SBREFA panels? No proposals? No final standards?

We will probably have to wait for the long-delayed Spring 2025 Regulatory Agenda to determine what OSHA’s regulatory (or deregulatory) plan actually looks like.

But lest you think the standards staff will be sitting around doing nothing, the standards and guidance directorate is expected to produce 20 guidance products in FY 2026.

And then there’s this: “In FY 2026, OSHA will continue to advance several deregulatory initiatives, in order to reduce the burden on businesses without jeopardizing worker safety standards.”

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And the staff has already been hard at work saving lives. Under direction from the White House and DOGE, staff have “revised numerous guidance documents to comply with several of President Trump’s executive orders related to language on diversity, equity and inclusion as well as language on sex/gender.”

So, there’s that.

Anyway, despite hearings starting later this month, don’t get your hopes up about seeing a heat standard (or any new standard) anytime soon.

Susan Harwood Grants

Trump proposes to eliminate the tiny \$12.8 million [Susan Harwood Training Grants](#) program. This again is no surprise, considering that every Republican President since George W. Bush — and every House of Congress that the Republicans control — have proposed eliminating the program which dates back to OSHA’s New Directions grants created during the Carter administration. Fortunately, the Republican hit squad has been unsuccessful, so far.

The Harwood grants are the only OSHA program that provides hands-on training to workers. Grants are awarded to unions, COSH and other worker groups, small business associations, colleges and universities. The true value of the Harwood program is that it is able to provide effective training to vulnerable workers and others who OSHA inspectors and compliance assistance staff can not otherwise reach: those whose first language is not English, day laborers, temporary employees — and others in high hazard industries. One thing we found at OSHA was that many workers are uncomfortable talking to OSHA inspectors, or don’t even know that OSHA exists or how it works. By providing grants to groups that had direct contact with vulnerable worker populations, the Harwood program has significantly expanded OSHA’s reach and impact.

More than [1.7 million workers](#) have been trained under the Harwood program just since 2001. Over the 40 years the grant program has been in existence, the total amount has never gone far over \$14 million. You can read more about the grants program and their defense from previous attacks [here](#).

What’s Trump’s reasoning for killing the program this time around? The budget labels the Harwood program “wasteful and unnecessary given there is limited evidence of success and the agency has other compliance assistance programs and tools that are more effective than Harwood Grants.” The facts, however, show that it has been highly successful and effective in protecting the lives of this country’s most vulnerable workers. Some of its success stories can still be found [here](#) (at least for now.)

Instead of the Harwood program, OSHA “is proposing to use alternative methods to develop and deliver training to reach the broadest possible audience.”

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What are those “alternative,” “more effective” programs? According to the budget document,

Alliances, Strategic Partnerships, On-site Consultation, and numerous targeted outreach events, such as the Fall Stand-Down on Construction, that provide information on workplace safety and health to the public. Additionally, many Alliance Program agreements contain a training element, and numerous training and information resources are available on OSHA’s website. For example, OSHA has more than 207 Safety and Health Topics pages available to the public on issues, such as lead and ventilation. In FY 2024, OSHA’s National and Regional/Area Office Alliances conducted 493 training activities reaching 53,749 people.

Now all of these programs have some purpose, but there is zero evidence that any of these programs is “more effective” than the Harwood grant in training workers — especially the most vulnerable workers — those who may not speak English, or work in highly hazardous workplaces, usually without union coverage or any knowledge of how to use OSHA. In a single year, Harwood actually trains more workers than the Alliance program reaches. And by “reaches,” the Alliance program includes people who just sit in conferences, whereas the Harwood program only counts workers actually trained.

None of these “alternatives” provide the kind of direct training to workers, nor do they produce the kind of [publicly available worker-oriented training materials](#) that the grant program provides. OSHA has never produced any evidence — even when under Republican control — that Harwood Grant spending is “wasteful.”

At less than \$13 million, Harwood is barely a tiny speck in the federal budget. The only feasible reason for its elimination is that it’s been extremely effective in empowering workers to defend their right to a safe workplace. And that threatens the business community.

State Plans

OSHA helps fund 29 state plan programs (21 states plus Puerto Rico run full programs, and 6 states plus the Virgin Islands run public employee only programs.) The state plans develop standards (copying OSHA’s or developing their own), and conduct enforcement operations, whistleblower investigations, and outreach for over 40 percent of the country. Given the importance of the state plans, the budget documents acknowledges that “it is imperative that OSHA State Plans have sufficient funding to continue their operations in protecting the health and safety of American workers.”

So one might wonder why the Administration then turns around and chops \$1.5 million off the state plan budget, after the state plans were cut by 4 million last year. Only 35,633 inspections are planned in the state plan states next year, a 6% decrease from 37,939 inspections planned for FY 2025, and a 3.2% drop from the 36,839 inspections actually conducted in FY 2024.

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Whistleblower Program

OSHA administers and enforces whistleblower protection provisions of 25 different statutes, including Section 11(c) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970. The program has been perennially underfunded and too slow to respond to whistleblower complaints, although its operation has improved significantly in recent years. The Trump administration proposes take the office back in the other direction by cutting \$1 million from the program (a 3.8% reduction) and reducing the number of complaints completed from 3,000 cases in FY 2025 to 2,574 cases in FY 2026 — a 14% reduction.

Compliance Assistance

OSHA's compliance assistance programs have taken only a very small hit. These are the programs that Republicans like much better than the “confrontational” enforcement program, or development of “job-killing, one-size-fits-all” standards.

There are two line-items for compliance assistance: **Federal compliance assistance** that funds OSHA's [Compliance Assistance Specialists](#), the OSHA [Training and Education Centers](#) and the [Alliance](#) and [Voluntary Protection Programs](#).

The **State Compliance Assistance** item provides 90% of funding states need to run their [On-Site Consultation Program](#) which provides free services to small and medium size businesses.

Federal compliance assistance takes on a 2.1% cut, and the Onsite Consultation Program only a 1.3% cut. Although even that small cut in the Consultation Program budget means that the Republicans' treasured small businesses will receive almost 1,400 fewer consultation visits next year than in FY 2025.

Statistics

The statistics line item funds OSHA's website, provides information technology services, manages employer illness and injury data collection, data analysis for the agency and complex databases that track OSHA enforcement activity, state plans and VPP. Trump wants to cut the program by 3%.

Technical Support

OSHA's technical support budget is also taking a heavy 10% hit in Trump's budget proposal. They will lose 17% of their staff. Under this budget item, OSHA assists inspections by identifying, sampling, and analyzing hazardous substances, investigating workplace hazards, developing control strategies, and producing technical publications and products. OSHA's technical support office also

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MSHA Budget

While Trump is taking action to increase coal production in this country, MSHA — the agency that protects the miners who will be digging that coal — faces an overall 10% cut. The cuts are mostly focused on Education Policy and Development (a 36% cut) and MSHA standards (a 26% cut). Enforcement gets “only” a 5.3% cut

MSHA was already short-staffed at the end of Biden’s term. The \$39.6 million and 47 staff cuts will make that worse, especially after losing 90 new hires who were not allowed to start work, and those who took Elon’s “fork in the road.”

With the state of MSHA and the proposed cuts, MSHA can’t be conducting the number and quality of inspections and other activities that the agency has been. Respirable dust sampling and other health enforcement activities and surveillance activities will likely be reduced.

And consistent with their hostility to training workers, Trump recommends eliminating the [Brookwood-Sago training grants](#) that were established by the Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response Act of 2006. The grant program was named in remembrance of 13 men who died in the disaster at the Jim Walter Resources Inc.’s No. 5 Mine in Brookwood, Alabama, in 2001 and 12 men who died after an explosion at Wolf Run Mining Company’s Sago Mine in West Virginia in 2006. The program provides funding for education and training programs to better identify, avoid, and prevent unsafe working conditions in and around mines. The training grant program will be eliminated “due to administrative inefficiency and insufficient evidence of success.”

(And like the elimination of the Susan Harwood grants, there is insufficient evidence of insufficient evidence of success — or “administrative inefficiency.”

According to Joe Main, who was MSHA director during the Obama administration, the proposed cuts “are more of the same undercutting miners’ safety and putting them more at risk of injury, illness and death that we have seen since Trump took office.”

Chemical Safety Board Execution

As he attempted in his first term, Trump is yet again attempting to sentence the [US Chemical Safety and Hazard Information Board](#) to death. His previous attempts during his first term were [unsuccessful](#).

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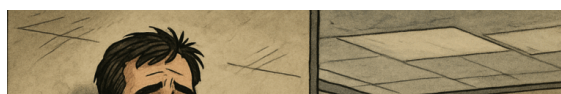
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But there is one major difference this year. The CSB is (or was) considered to be an “independent agency.” Like other independent agencies created by Congress, the 5 board members are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. But the agency is (or was) authorized to work independently from the White House, and propose its own budget.



In his first term, when Trump proposed to eliminate the CSB, the agency nevertheless issued a 20 page budget proposal each year, requesting its full budget and outlining the investigations the agency was conducting, a long list of accomplishments and a summary of agency recommendations that had been successfully closed. (e.g. [FY 2018](#) and [FY 2019](#))

But the official CSB budget “[request](#)” this year looks more like a hostage video or a Soviet self-criticism session prior to facing the firing squad: It’s three paragraphs long and requests zero dollars. It then explains “why I deserve to die:”

CSB duplicates substantial capabilities in the Environmental Protection Agency and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to investigate chemical-related mishaps. CSB generates unprompted studies of the chemical industry and recommends policies that they have no authority to create or enforce. This function should reside within agencies that have authorities to issue regulations in accordance with applicable legal standards.

If I was a betting man, I’d put money on the assumption that OMB wrote this budget request, not the leaders of the CSB.

So much for being an “independent” agency.

“ The official CSB budget “request” this year is more like a hostage video or a Soviet self-criticism session prior to the firing squad.

But whoever wrote it, the “justification” for elimination of the CSB is a lie.

This tiny agency performs a unique (and at \$14 million per year, inexpensive) function that no other Federal agency performs. The agency is able to conduct in-depth root cause analyses of major chemical incidents and issue

recommendations to federal and state government agencies (like OSHA and EPA), industry associations (like the American Petroleum Institute) and labor unions.

Whereas OSHA and EPA can only look into specific violations of their own existing standards and regulations, the CSB can look at deeper causes that may not be covered by any regulations — things like the effect of worker fatigue, organizational changes on workplace hazards, corporate budget cuts or lax oversight.

Because the CSB is not tied to any specific enforceable laws or regulations, it can explore the interrelationship of federal regulations, state laws and industry standards to develop a comprehensive picture of the root causes of chemical safety problems and their solutions.

And while the CSB is not an enforcement agency and cannot issue citations, its recommendations can form the basis of changes in standards or on industry consensus guidelines. Many of the CSB's recommendations have formed the basis of EPA's revised Risk Management Program regulations and OSHA's current work on revising its 30 year-old Process Safety Management standard.

You can read much more about past activities and battles to save the CSB [here](#).

What is to be done?

As I said above, we are just at the beginning of the appropriations process. There will then be deliberations in the House and the Senate, and eventually both Houses of Congress will have to come up with a budget that they agree on. And judging from recent past history, the budget proposal from the Republican-controlled House of Representatives could be even worse than the President's recommendations. This could go on way past October with one or more "continuing resolutions" until a final budget is agreed upon.

Congress has never in recent memory been able to complete a budget by the end of the fiscal year, September 30. This year is unlikely to be an exception. So, there will likely be a short-term "continuing resolutions," possibly until December or into the new year.

Because 60 votes are needed in the Senate to pass a budget, and there are some Republicans who are unlikely to ever vote yes on any conceivable budget, Democrats have some leverage to temper the President's recommendations (or the House bill).

That's where you come in.

Your Senators and Congresspersons will need to know that cuts in OSHA, MSHA, NIOSH or the Chemical Safety Board will mean that more workers will get killed, maimed and sickened. They need to hear real stories of how these agencies save

lives.

And if you live in a district or state with members on the [Appropriations Committees](#), your voice is especially important.

Stay tuned. More details on strategy will emerge from unions and public health advocates over the next few months. Watch this space.

FY 2026 OSHA and MSHA Budgets (Thousands of Dollars)

25 entries per page Search:

OSHA (in thousands of dollars)	FY 2024 Final	FY25 Final	FY 2026 Request	\$Change From FY2025	%Change From FY 2025
TOTAL	632,309	632,309	582,381	-49,928	-7.9%
Safety and Health Standards	21,000	21,000	16,000	-5,000	-23.8%
Federal Enforcement	243,000	243,000	219,343	-23,657	-9.7%
Whistleblower Protection	22,500	26,000	25,000	-1,000	-3.8%
State Enforcement	120,000	116,673	115,200	-1,473	-1.3%
Technical Support	26,000	26,000	23,500	-2,500	-9.6%
Federal Compliance Assistance	78,262	79,973	78,262	-1,711	-2.1%
State Compliance Assistance	63,160	61,276	60,476	-800	-1.3%
Training Grants	12,787	12,787	0	-12,787	-100.0%
Safety and Health Statistics	35,500	35,500	34,500	-1,000	-2.8%
Executive Administration	10,100	10,100	10,100	0	0.0%

MSHA (in

thousands of
dollars)

TOTAL	387,816	387,816	348,207	-39,609	-10.2%
Enforcement	265,774	266,524	252,307	-14,217	-5.3%
Standards Development	5,000	5,000	3,700	-1,300	-26.0%
Assessments	7,191	8,191	7,000	-1,191	-14.5%
Education Policy and Development	39,820	39,070	25,000	-14,070	-36.0%
Technical Support	36,041	36,041	31,200	-4,841	-13.4%
Program Administration	16,000	16,900	13,500	-3,400	-20.1%
Program Eval. and Info Resources	17,990	16,090	15,500	-590	-3.7%

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