

# Forward, Not Back

The Truth About  
Safeguards and Jobs

Produced by the N.J. Work Environment Council (WEC)

# What is the purpose of a corporation?

Good jobs?

Environmental  
protection?

Workers' health?

Consumer safety?

Equal opportunity?



**Profits**

# What protects the public interest?

## Standards all employers must follow...

- Clean Air Act
- Occupational Safety and Health Act
- Worker and Community Right to Know Act
- Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health Act
- Pollution Prevention Act
- Conscientious Employee Protection Act
- State policies WEC and partners have won on...  
chemical safety and security, safe lifting and violence prevention in health care, workplace air quality, worker participation in environmental inspections, etc.

What do corporations say when  
safeguards are proposed?

**'Job killing  
regulations'**

# Corporations say:

“[These changes in the fire code would lead to] the wiping out of industry in this state.”

*-The Associated Industries of New York in 1913 after 146 people were killed in the Triangle factory fire*

# Corporations say:

“[Unemployment compensation] would increase unemployment by...discouraging efforts to relieve unemployment and by placing a premium on idleness.”

*-Illinois Manufacturers Association, 1934*

# Corporations say:

“Never in the history of the world has any measure been brought in here so insidiously designed so as to prevent business recovery, to enslave workers, and to prevent any possibility of the employers providing work for the people.”

*-Representative John Taber (R-NY), 1935, speaking against the proposed law creating Social Security*

# Corporations say:

The proposed Equal Pay Act to mandate equal pay for women in the same jobs as men “would eliminate thousands and even hundreds of thousands of job opportunities for women.”

*- The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 1963*



# Corporations say:

“The minimum wage has caused more misery and unemployment than anything since the Great Depression.”

*-Presidential candidate Ronald Reagan, 1980*

# Corporations say:

[Removing lead from gasoline] “threatens the jobs of the 14 million Americans directly dependent and the 29 million Americans indirectly dependent on the petrochemical industry for employment.”

*-Statement by the petrochemical industry, 1979*

# What destroyed 8 million jobs in 2007?

New environmental or worker safeguards?

**Or was it...**

- Wall Street success in removing public oversight
- Investment bank abuses
- High-risk lending to make even higher profits
- Destructive executive compensation practices
- Conflicts of interest

*- U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Investigations, April 13, 2011*

# How did corporations use the recession?

## To get even richer

- Profits of U.S. corporations at all-time high
- CEO pay now 231 times average worker
- \$5 trillion in cash reserves – most ever



# How did corporations use the recession?



## To destroy jobs

- Pre-crash stock market peak 2007 – unemployment was at 4.7%
- Stocks regain peak in 2013 but unemployment at 7.9%

# How did corporations use the recession?

## To destroy jobs

- Move jobs overseas using “trade agreements”
- New technology
- Make employees work harder for lower pay and benefits
- Drive out smaller competition



# How did corporations use the recession?

“There’s class warfare, all right,”  
Mr. [Warren] Buffett said,  
“but it’s my class,  
the rich class, that’s making war,  
and we’re winning.”

*- Quoted in New York Times*

What do CEOs and their allies say  
destroyed those 8 million jobs?

# 'Job killing regulations'

Between 2007 and 2011,  
use of that phrase in U.S. newspapers  
increased by 17,550%.



**What are the facts  
about public safeguards?**

# Safeguards protect the public, control costs through prevention

Clean Air Amendments of 1990, in 2010 saved...

- \$1.3 trillion per year, 25 times the costs
- 160,000 lives
- 100,000 hospital visits
- Millions of cases of asthma and bronchitis
- 13.2 million lost work days
- 3.2 million lost school days

# Safeguards protect the public, control costs through prevention

- High hazard industries receiving random state OSHA inspections in Calif. saved 26% on workers' compensation costs
- Equals \$6.6 billion per year nationwide

# Safeguards prevent cost shifting from corporations to innocent victims



Lack of oversight at BP =

- Hundreds of thousands of jobs lost in tourism, fishing, small businesses
- Immediate and lasting health impacts
- Damage to habitat and wildlife

# Safeguards prevent cost shifting from corporations to innocent victims

- Paulsboro, N.J.: a chemical used by plastics company for 25 years now at alarmingly high levels in town water supply

# Safeguards prevent cost shifting from corporations to innocent victims

- 47 people killed in Quebec oil-train wreck where investigation found crude shipments “largely unchecked”
- Thousands of crude oil train cars cross N.J. each week
- U.S. safety standards for oil trains have not been updated in 50 years



# Safeguards prevent cost shifting from corporations to innocent victims

- Passaic River: More than \$1.7 billion to clean up toxins including dioxin, a chemical suspected of causing cancer
  - Dumped by a manufacturer of Agent Orange during the U.S. war in Vietnam



# Safeguards protect responsible corporations

Competition based on creativity and efficiency, not cutting corners

Poll of small business owners in U.S.:  
78 % say regulations protect them from unfair competition



# Safeguards create jobs

- When generating cleaner energy
- Making schools, homes, buildings energy efficient
- Making industries more sustainable
- Cleaning up past pollution



# Safeguards create jobs

- Proposed Clean Air Act safeguards = 1.5 million new jobs updating power plants
- Environmental exports support 1.6 million jobs
- Up to 570,000 jobs from proposed vehicle fuel economy standards

# Safeguards almost never cost jobs

- Corporate reports to government: only 3 of every 1,000 large-scale layoffs claimed to be caused by regulations
- Pollution abatement = half a percent of U.S. manufacturing costs

# Forward, Not Back

- Wall Street and corporate CEOs destroyed millions of jobs due to weak public oversight.
- They blame job losses on safeguards that protect health and safety and our environment -- just as they opposed every reform that improved the lives and rights of all Americans.
- We need *more* effective safeguards and enforcement, not *less*.

# Forward, Not Back

- **Advocate public policies** that provide stronger safeguards, not weaker
- **Educate** – discussions, workshops, fact sheets, films about the real causes of job loss
- **Hold corporations accountable** for job losses and workplace and environmental hazards
- **Support high-road economic strategies** that create good sustainable jobs

# Forward, Not Back

- **'Just Transition'** in rare cases of job loss due to environmental safeguards
  - Full wage replacement and health coverage for reasonable period
  - Job training until find comparable employment

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What can we do  
together?

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For fact sheets and other resources, see  
[njwec.org](http://njwec.org)

For more examples, see also [CryWolfProject.org](http://CryWolfProject.org)