



Labor and Employment:

Adapting Policies for a 21st-Century Workforce

The manufacturing shop floor has changed. Meanwhile, manufacturers in the United States face government-imposed challenges that are not faced equally by many of our global competitors. The U.S. will not maintain its mantle of economic leadership unless all labor stakeholders work together to ensure the best and most productive workplaces. Employees, organized labor, management and lawmakers should collaborate in search of outcomes that deliver a positive work environment, opportunities for employee professional growth and safe and healthy facilities.

Labor and employment laws must be modernized to account for advancements in worker safety and productivity and the changing nature of work. Regulators must also update their approach to account for the modern shop floor by enabling innovation and streamlining clunky and outdated regulations that stand in the way of a safer and more prosperous workplace. For their part, policymakers need to quickly adapt to the changing nature of work and avoid seeking one-size-fits-all policies that are no longer appropriate for the wide array of available work arrangements

and duties. Manufacturers understand that well-functioning markets promote competitive wages, that equality of opportunity is essential, that equal work should earn equal pay and that workers should be guaranteed the freedom to associate or not associate with a labor organization without fear of intimidation or coercion.

Policymakers must update workplace laws and regulations to unleash the full potential of modern manufacturing and innovation and ensure that the U.S. remains globally competitive well into the future. Manufacturers and the manufacturing workforce are constantly evolving and adapting to the demands of the 21st-century economy to stay safe, productive and competitive. Old-fashioned, inaccurate views of manufacturing lead to increased compliance burdens for manufacturers without benefitting workers or improving safety outcomes. It is time to abandon those misplaced views and modernize labor and employment laws and regulations to fit the needs of today's manufacturing workforce.

A Labor and Employment Agenda for the Future Must:

- Return to a balanced, dependable and fair approach to labor policies and regulations.
- Update complicated and outdated labor and employment policies to reduce regulatory burdens.
- Enable employers to continue to provide employees with new opportunities in modern manufacturing and more competitive pay through innovative means.
- Adapt to the changing needs of the modern manufacturing workforce.
- Focus on outcomes, encourage collaboration and highlight successful approaches manufacturers take with their employees and at their facilities to promote more productive and safer workplaces.

Actions for Leaders to Take:

- ✓ Support initiatives that will codify and stabilize labor law precedent with respect to union organizing, appropriate bargaining unit sizes and definitions of key labor terms.
- ✓ Promote 21st-century workplace ideas that incentivize employees to remain and grow in the manufacturing sector, such as options for compensatory time off.
- ✓ Reestablish collaborative approaches with employers and create effective federal advisory councils to address workplace safety needs, equal employment opportunities and a diverse workplace.
- ✓ Support legislation that guarantees employee choice and freedom of association.
- ✓ Codify clear, uniform and workable federal nondiscrimination protections for all employees in the workplace.
- ✓ Ensure meaningful and effective oversight of key workplace regulators, such as the Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration and Wage and Hour Division, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and National Labor Relations Board to promote smart and fair regulatory approaches.

“Modernizing outdated one-size-fits-all labor and employment laws is not only the right decision—it is also the smart decision. We strive every day to provide the best work environment and benefits for our employees. We are a more competitive employer when we offer more flexibility, taking into account employees’ unique situations and the unique demands on our business.”

—Louis A. Vega, President, Dow North America

