



COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION & LABOR
REPUBLICANS

COMMITTEE
STATEMENT

**Opening Statement of Rep. Bradley Byrne (R-AL), Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Workforce Protections Hearing:
“From the Fields to the Factories: Preventing Workplace Injury and Death from
Excessive Heat”
July 11, 2019**

“We all share a common goal of keeping American workers healthy and safe. When they flourish and prosper, so does our nation. Safety and health in the workplace must be a priority, and it’s important that the government work with employers to prevent related injuries and illnesses.

We are here today to discuss occupational exposure to heat a significant issue in many states like Alabama even beyond the summer months. Heat exposure is currently regulated under the general duty clause of *the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970*. Employers are already required to take definitive steps to protect employees and provide a safe work environment, and that includes preventing workers from being exposed to heat that results in illness. Additionally, as we will hear today, several states have taken action and created their own standards on heat-illness prevention that reflect their own unique economies, climates, and workplace challenges.

Heat safety should be given careful deliberation so that we, as lawmakers, can make educated, well-informed decisions. Unfortunately, our colleagues on the other side of the aisle appear to be scrambling to force the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to impose another one-size-fits-all federal mandate for occupational heat exposure. We should look at the history of this issue to understand where we are before a new national regulation is considered. In 2012, the Obama administration denied a petition to establish a heat standard. In fact, at the time, OSHA’s head said their increased focus on enforcement and robust educational and outreach campaigns adequately addressed the hazard. Nevertheless, Committee Democrats are now moving forward with legislation to

mandate a national standard without fully understanding if that is an appropriate and necessary course of action.

Additionally, the majority is once again holding a legislative hearing on short notice on a bill that was introduced only a day before this hearing. This unfortunate habit, which we have seen time and time again this year, doesn't give Members the opportunity to properly examine the issue or the bill text fully, and demonstrates a lack of seriousness about the issue at hand.

Before this Committee or the House rushes to mandate yet another federal regulation, Members should strive to gain a better understanding of how OSHA is currently preventing heat illnesses and what impact a regulation would have at the national level. More mandates from Washington do not necessarily equal better policies to help workers. And rushed, partisan policies rarely yield efficient, effective, or permanent solutions.

We can and ought to be working together to prioritize the interests of the American worker through thoughtful deliberation rather than hastily written press releases about partisan legislation.

Regardless of the circumstances of today's hearing, I thank the witnesses for being here today and look forward to their testimony so that we can begin to gain a better understanding of how existing measures are preventing heat illness."

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