

# Unions save lives through education, awareness

by **Tony Hufford, Editor**  
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Union members and workers everywhere are bombarded with information from right-wing groups and political candidates attempting to create reasons why working people would not want to join a union.

In response, there is some reasonable information available that should convince us all why it is a good idea to organize.

Let's take a look at health and safety. Michigan, for example, is a highly organized state compared to most, with just over 16 percent of the workforce organized. Looking at the AFL-CIO's most recent health and safety injury and fatality report, from 2006, Michigan workers are obviously safer than workers in right-to-work states. If you compare Michigan's injuries per 100,000 workers (2.3) to Tennessee's (5.0) you can see you are far safer working in Michigan. And Michigan has many more industrial jobs than Tennessee. When compared to Texas's injury rate (4.6), Michigan's is still on top. What about Mississippi's



(8.9) and Alabama's (6.1)? I can't imagine a union-friendly state putting up with 486 fatalities in one year. That's what Texas had in 2006. Without unions to train and practice good health and safety techniques, workers are on their own in a virtual killing field.

These fatality and injury statistics are outrageous and would never fly in Michigan or other union friendly states, but other locations use their "low cost of doing business" as an incentive to lure prospective employers; but at what risk to their workers?

Being in a union keeps you safer than working in a nonunion or right-to-work shop. In fact, as good as we are in Michigan concerning health and safety, our serious injuries per 1,000 workers has dropped every year since 2002.

We have listened to a lot of political rhetoric, but most candidates choose not to talk about unions or how important they are. The truth is, unions save lives through health and safety education and awareness.



# Vanguard

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~ **Samuel Gompers**

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