



**Richard L. Trumka
(1949–2021)**

**TING THE RIGHT
ORGANIZE ACT**

#PROAct

August 18, 2021
AFL-CIO

A SALUTE TO OUR BROTHER

In Memoriam

Richard L. Trumka

1949–2021

President, AFL-CIO

AFL-CIO



Richard Louis Trumka. Son of organizers. Son of immigrants. Coal miner. Mine safety committee chair. Youngest president of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) in its entire history. Leader of the victorious factory occupation in the Pittston Co. Coal strike. Secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO. President of the AFL-CIO. Husband. Father. Grandfather. Brother and friend to each and every one of us.

As we mourn President Trumka, his legacy is all around us. The U.S. government this week took action against employers in Mexico that were violating workers' rights—using the new powers of the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement that Trumka led the labor movement to fight for and win. Millions have health care today, sleep soundly at night with their pensions secure, have jobs and economic security because of what Trumka led the labor movement to fight for and win in the American Rescue Plan. And in a real way, our democracy is safer today because Trumka gave voice to working people's determination to defend it—to make sure every vote was counted in 2020 and the results were respected.

Trumka saw this moment as a moment of extraordinary opportunity for working people and our labor movement. A moment won through struggle. A moment when we could change the structure of power in the American economy and the world economy. By passing the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act. Passing President Joe Biden's Build Back Better agenda—investing trillions in good union jobs. And continuing our work of defending democracy by passing voting rights legislation that would end the attacks on workers' right to vote now being mounted by radical right-wing politicians across our country. And so now WE must seize this moment.

On Saturday, Aug. 14, President Trumka lay in repose at the AFL-CIO headquarters in Washington, D.C. In the House of Labor he so loved. But his soul goes marching on.

At the AFL-CIO, the mantle of leadership has been taken up by acting President Liz Shuler (IBEW), the AFL-CIO's secretary-treasurer, and the first woman and youngest person ever to be president of the federation. While the death of an AFL-CIO sitting president is unprecedented, it was not unforeseen by the framers of our Constitution. As provided in the AFL-CIO Constitution, the AFL-CIO Executive Council will meet Aug. 20 to elect a president to complete Trumka's term.

In the days to come, the PRO Act will be reintroduced in the U.S. Senate as the Richard L. Trumka Protecting the Right to Organize Act. And on Labor Day, we as a labor movement will take to the streets in celebration of our movement, and to call on the U.S. Senate to pass the PRO Act, defend our right to vote and win a better day for working people!

RICHARD L. TRUMKA (1949–2021)



Richard L. Trumka was president of the 12.5-million-member AFL-CIO from 2009 until his death on Aug. 5, 2021. An outspoken advocate for social and economic justice, Trumka was the nation's clearest voice on the critical need to ensure that all workers have a good job and the power to determine our wages and working conditions. He led the labor movement's efforts to create an economy based on broadly shared prosperity and held elected officials and employers accountable to working families.

In 1982, at age 33, Trumka ran on a reform ticket and was elected the youngest president of the United Mine Workers of America.

There, in addition to reforming the UMWA's fractious bureaucracy, he led one of the most successful strikes in recent American history against the Pittston Coal Co., which tried to avoid paying into an industry-wide health and pension fund.

Trumka was elected AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer in 1995 and held that post until 2009, when he was elected president.

Trumka's economic advocacy extended from the kitchen table and spanned the globe. He rallied international labor support for workers struggling for justice, and fought to end unfair trade practices and restore U.S. manufacturing strength. As secretary-treasurer, he carved out an innovative leadership role that continues today, working with programs that invest the collectively bargained pension and benefit funds of the labor movement to ensure they serve the long-term interests of workers.

Trumka's commitment to improving life for working people began early. He grew up in the small coal-mining town of Nemacolin, Pa. Nearly all the men in his family, including his father and grandfather, were coal miners. Trumka followed them into the mines, working there as he attended Penn State and Villanova University School of Law.

Solidarity and his determination to improve life for all working families was a driving force in Trumka's life as a labor leader. Comprehensive immigration reform was a central part of that goal. Trumka's work on behalf of immigrants was just one facet of his deep commitment to securing economic and social justice for all working people.

Trumka envisioned an economy of shared prosperity for all working families—an economy of rising wages, equal pay, respect at work, safe jobs, secure retirement, and the freedom for all workers to form or join unions and bargain collectively.

President Trumka carried with conviction throughout his life the power of solidarity and commitment—from the mines of southwest Pennsylvania to the helm of America's largest federation of unions. With solidarity and commitment, we all have a chance to work in dignity and live well.

CENTRAL REGION LABOR MOVEMENT TRIBUTES

WISCONSIN STATE AFL-CIO PRESIDENT STEPHANIE BLOOMINGDALE (AFT)

“Wisconsin’s labor movement was stunned today by the news of the sudden death of national AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka. Trumka was a tireless champion for working people everywhere. His boundless energy in the fight for workers’ rights was matched by a keen understanding of the issues that impact working families.

“When former Gov. Scott Walker moved to strip workers of our collective bargaining rights, Rich Trumka immediately recognized the wider significance of the fight in Wisconsin and offered the resources of the national organization to union members here. More recently, he was pivotal in directing organized labor’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic, fighting to ensure that front-line workers had access to personal protective equipment and other measures to help keep us safe. Trumka always made it clear that when workers aren’t safe, no one is safe.

“We are grateful for Richard Trumka’s many decades of leadership and heartfelt solidarity to his fellow workers. His fight to give working people in Wisconsin and beyond a voice in our workplaces will continue. Today, however, we pause to salute one of our struggle’s true heroes. We will honor his memory by continuing the work to which he dedicated his life.”

MICHIGAN STATE AFL-CIO

“Rich Trumka was a dear friend, a clear-eyed leader and a passionate warrior for the working class. For 50 years, he stood on the front lines and the picket lines, from Appalachia to Alabama. His legacy will be one of championing the rights of all working people and forcefully denouncing racism, but that legacy is unfinished so long as any worker who wants to join a union cannot because of our weak and outdated labor laws. The U.S. Senate should pass the PRO Act without delay, to finish the work to which President Trumka dedicated his entire life.”

OHIO AFL-CIO PRESIDENT TIM BURGA (USW)

“Rich was a relentless champion of all working people, and Ohio benefited greatly from his leadership on issues ranging from injured workers’ compensation, collective bargaining, minimum wage, unemployment benefits, fair trade and the recent passage of the American Recovery Plan.

“Standing on Rich’s shoulders, we will pour everything we have to build an economy, society and democracy that lifts up every working family and community, including passage of the American Jobs Plan and the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act.”

TO VIEW ALL CENTRAL REGION TRIBUTES: [CLICK HERE](#)

EAST REGION LABOR MOVEMENT TRIBUTES

ALABAMA AFL-CIO PRESIDENT BREN RILEY (USW)

"Today the working people of Alabama and all of America have lost a champion. AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka worked tirelessly each and every day to better the lives and livelihoods of America's workers.

He was a fearless defender of our rights to organize and collectively bargain, whether here in the south or on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C."

FLORIDA AFL-CIO PRESIDENT MIKE WILLIAMS (IBEW)

"The Florida AFL-CIO joins millions of working people across the nation in mourning the loss of AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka.

President Trumka dedicated his life and career to the fight for America's working families, from his start as a coal miner in Pennsylvania to his tenure as president of America's largest organized labor federation."

GEORGIA AFL-CIO PRESIDENT CHARLIE FLEMMING (IAM)

"This morning, America's labor movement suddenly and unexpectedly lost the life of its leader, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka.

Today, every worker in Georgia—every worker in America—mourns. This is a dark day for America's unions.

President Trumka was a lion of a leader. He embodied everything about what it meant to be a fighter, a worker, a union sibling, and a true pioneer for our movement."

NEW YORK STATE AFL-CIO PRESIDENT MARIO CILENTO (TNG-CWA)

"Throughout his 50 years of service to the labor movement, there was no one more tenacious in fighting for what he believed in; -improving the lives of working people," said Cilento in a statement.

"It was an honor and privilege to work with Rich over the years and to witness his passion for the cause of uniting our movement. He had the courage of his convictions to hold our elected officials and employers across this country accountable to working people."

TO VIEW ALL EAST REGION TRIBUTES:

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WEST REGION LABOR MOVEMENT TRIBUTES

ALASKA AFL-CIO PRESIDENT JOELLE HALL (UFCW)

“A dear friend of Alaska, he understood the importance of the Alaska labor movement to the American labor movement. Our fights were his fights. He demonstrated this time and time again as he stood shoulder and shoulder with Alaska’s working people.

“My predecessor, Vince Beltrami, and I walked picket lines and rallied together with Trumka right here in Alaska. He was right here with us in our successful campaign to raise the minimum wage in 2014. And we are proud to have called him a true friend.

“Trumka’s fighting spirit and dedicated devotion to improving the lives of Americans is an inspiration to us all. Our brothers and sisters here in Alaska owe Trumka a debt of gratitude. Courageous in every sense of the word, he never let us forget the power of collective action. With his memory and legacy in mind, we recommit to fight like hell every day for all working Alaskans—union or not. Rest in Power, President Trumka.”

ARIZONA AFL-CIO

“Arizona’s labor movement was saddened to learn of the passing of Richard Trumka, president of the AFL-CIO. President Trumka devoted his life to the betterment of working families across the country and the labor movement as a whole. During a visit to Arizona in 2018, Trumka said, ‘We’re the true American patriots. We’re fearless. We’re strong. We’re powerful. We’re united. We’re rising in solidarity...real solidarity... where your picket line is my picket line, and my picket line is your picket line.’ To honor the lifetime of dedication from Trumka, the Arizona AFL-CIO and the labor movement will continue the fight by pushing forward for workers’ rights, for safer work conditions, for higher wages and true equality in the workplace and for the passage of the PRO Act.”

CALIFORNIA LABOR FEDERATION EXECUTIVE SECRETARY-TREASURER ART PULASKI (IAM)

“This is an incalculable loss for the labor movement in America and around the world. Rich’s legacy can be seen and felt in every worker he helped to achieve a better life. To his last day, he vigorously fought for the most meaningful labor law reform in a century, the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act. When this bill becomes law leading to a renaissance in worker organizing, every single worker will reap the benefits of Rich’s lifetime of advocacy. We send our most heartfelt condolences to Rich’s family. While his loss hurts deeply for all of us who knew and loved him, we know Rich would want us to heed the calling of legendary labor activist Joe Hill: ‘Don’t mourn, organize!’ Rest in Power, President Trumka.”

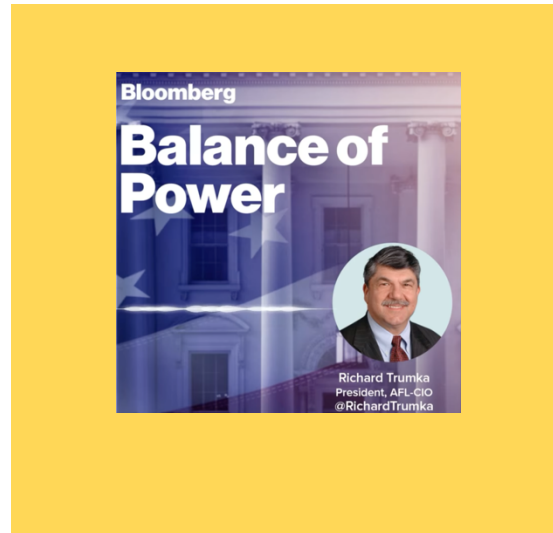
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PRESS CLIPS

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS—TRIBUTES TO PRESIDENT RICHARD TRUMKA



Biden Honors 'Close Friend' Richard Trumka
After Hearing of His Passing



David Westin Pays Tribute to President
Trumka



Rich Trumka Lived in Solidarity



Labor Lost a Great One in Richard Trumka

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