

## **Newsom follows Trump's lead in cutting worker safety funding while Cal/OSHA inspector vacancies remain above 40%**

**Garrett Brown – April 8, 2025**

California Governor Gavin Newsom is following Donald Trump's lead in cutting funding for worker health and safety while the latest available staffing data for Cal/OSHA indicates field inspector vacancies remain above 40%. Ten enforcement offices have inspector vacancies above 50%, which means worker protections in the state are crippled.

President Trump has shut down the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), a key research and safety certification agency, and has proposed closing at least eleven Federal OSHA enforcement offices, which would leave large swaths of the country with no local worker protection agency offices.

In January 2025, Governor Newsom proposed cutting Cal/OSHA's enforcement budget by \$21 million dollars (\$21,028,000) for the fiscal year starting on July 1, 2025. Cal/OSHA is not funded by the state's General Fund but rather from an annual grant from Fed OSHA, an assessment on employers' workers compensation insurance premiums for the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Fund, and a fee-for-service for equipment inspections on elevators, amusement rides, etc. All these funds are independent of the state General Fund.

This proposed funding cut comes at a time when the OSH Fund – the main source of Cal/OSHA's independent funding – has run a \$200 million surplus in the last two fiscal years. Resources are immediately available to replace any cut in Federal OSHA funding to Cal/OSHA, as well as to maintain the agency's state funding.

The Governor's proposed \$21 million cut to Cal/OSHA enforcement is not prompted by any concerns about the state budget, but is a deliberate decision to reduce worker protections in California that are fully funded by an independent sources of revenue.

Meanwhile, Cal/OSHA had 116 vacancies in positions for compliance safety and health officers (CSHO) in December 2024, for a vacancy rate of 43%. The data, released by the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) in March 2025, is from the November 30, 2024, "Organization Chart" for Cal/OSHA. DIR withholds release of Cal/OSHA staffing data for months after it has been generated.

Fifteen enforcement District Offices have CSHO vacancy rates at or above 40% -- with ten offices having vacancy rates of 50% or more. These offices are: PSM/Refinery Unit (70%); San Francisco (67%); Santa Barbara (67%); Fremont (60%); San Bernardino (57%); Riverside (57%); Bakersfield (57%); Fresno (55%); American Canyon (55%);

Oakland (50%); PSM/Non-Refinery Unit (47%); Monrovia (47%); Van Nuys (45%); Santa Ana (45%); and Long Beach (40%).

An additional three offices have vacancy rates between 33% and 40% -- San Diego, Sacramento and Foster City.

The California Employment Development Department (EDD) reported the California civilian labor force in December 2024 as 19,399,400 workers. The 160.5 FTE CSHO positions represents an inspector to worker ratio of 1 inspector to 120,869 workers. **Cal/OSHA's inspector to worker ratio of 1 inspector to 120,000 workers is much less health protective than Washington State's ratio of 1 to 26,000, and Oregon's ratio of 1 to 24,000.** [These non-California ratios were cited in the April 2024 "Death on the Job" report.]

The DOSH Org Chart indicates that 10 field CSHOs are "bilingual." Region II (Northern California and Central Valley) and Region VIII (Central Valley and Central Coast) – regions with numerous farmworkers – both have one bilingual CSHOs in the field. It is estimated that at least 5 million of the state's 19 million worker labor force speak languages other than English, with many monolingual in their native tongue.

In addition, there are only three industrial hygiene inspectors among the 160 field compliance officers. Which means that industrial hygiene inspections for "health" issues such as exposures to heat, silica, lead, chemicals, and repetitive motions/ergonomics are severely limited.