**Headline:** Why Sandbagging Public Servants Invites Waste, Fraud, and Abuse

By David McCall

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**[Article Body:]**

Workers who issue licenses and permits for the city of Dallas fought back in 2024 when officials moved them into a building that failed to meet the very same safety requirements they enforce at dozens of other office towers.

The workers, including members of the United Steelworkers (USW), organized a [rally](https://texasaflcio.org/dallas/news/good-gets-better), secured the city council’s intervention, and leveraged media coverage to highlight the [fire risks](https://candysdirt.com/2024/06/17/the-lemon-on-stemmons-employee-emails-allege-fraud-safety-concerns-oppressive-work-environment-at-stemmons-freeway-building/), [140 code violations](https://dallasexpress.com/city/140-code-violations-disrupt-city-dept-s-office-relocation/), and other hazards that the 11-story building at 7800 N. Stemmons Freeway posed to them and the public they serve.

Within a few weeks, the city surrendered to the mounting outrage and [closed the building](https://www.nbcdfw.com/investigations/building-concerns-force-closure-of-dallas-city-building-permit-office/3512927/) that workers called the “lemon on Stemmons.”

“It was an accident waiting to happen,” recalled Lou Luckhardt, former president of USW Local 9487, noting the union empowered workers to expose the city’s foolish purchase of a money pit and callous disregard for public safety.

It’s the kind of security that Americans are rapidly losing as anti-worker extremists at all levels of government cut union jobs, attack organized labor, and target the labor rights of the dedicated public servants who keep the nation running.

Elon Musk, the billionaire who attached himself like a tick to the Trump administration, continues his mad efforts to decimate the federal government and deprive Americans of the basic services they need.

His [ignorant meddling](https://www.npr.org/2025/03/15/nx-s1-5328721/reduction-in-force-rif-federal-workers-job-cuts-musk-doge-layoffs) eviscerated the Education Department, denying the nation’s most vulnerable citizens the support they need to build productive lives. He unleashed devastating cuts to [veterans’](https://usw.org/musks-war-on-veterans/) services, turning the government against America’s heroes, and he pushed the nation’s Social Security system [to the brink](https://newrepublic.com/post/193134/social-security-falling-apart-elon-musk-doge-cuts) of collapse, putting the benefits of tens of millions of retirees at risk.

Now, the administration wants to [kill collective bargaining rights and union protections](https://www.cnn.com/2025/03/28/politics/executive-order-collective-bargaining-national-security/index.html) for hundreds of thousands of workers across the federal government, summarily stripping them of the voice they need to protect themselves and serve the taxpayers. By silencing workers, the government opens the door to waste, fraud, and abuse.

“If you have no checks and balances in an administration, people take advantage of that,” pointed out Luckhardt, noting union workers know their jobs better than anyone else and hold management accountable on the taxpayers’ behalf.

“They’re dedicated to their jobs because they love public service work,” he said of the federal workers targeted by Musk.

“They’re skilled in their special areas. Many of them are military veterans. These are very organized folks,” added Luckhardt, financial secretary-treasurer of the Dallas AFL-CIO Council, comprising about 40 unions representing workers in the public and private sectors.

As if sandbagging unionized federal workers isn’t despicable enough, some states recently ramped up their own assaults on union members who serve as educators, firefighters, corrections officers, and road workers, as well as in many other positions.

Despite widespread criticism, anti-worker lawmakers and the right-wing governor in Utah just deprived essential public workers of a basic right. They rushed through legislation [banning collective bargaining](https://kutv.com/news/politics/utah-labor-bill-gov-spencer-cox-comments-misleading-disingenuous-ban-union-negotiation-contract-public-employees-police-teachers-firefighters) for emergency responders and other public servants, depriving these workers of a voice they need to safeguard themselves and the public.

In Florida, a state that enacted legislation in 2023 stripping union representation from thousands of government workers, right-wing lawmakers now hope to [compound the harm](https://www.cltampa.com/news/florida-republicans-file-bills-that-would-make-it-harder-for-government-workers-to-form-and-keep-unions-19559657) by making it more difficult for public servants to join unions in the future.

And in Michigan, the speaker of the state House—Republican Matt Hall—refuses to transmit to Governor Gretchen Whitmer a series of pro-worker bills passed last session. While [state law requires](https://usw.org/news/rapid-response-action-call-speaker-matt-hall-is-breaking-the-law-and-michigan-workers-pay-the-price/) the bills be passed to Whitmer for her signature, they instead remain in limbo, with thousands of public-sector workers denied the retirement security and health care they earned.

Hall’s game-playing represents an unprovoked slap in the face to workers who put the public first, even at the risk of their own lives, noted Rob Rosekrans, vice president of USW Local 15157, which represents about 100 union members who work for Bay County in the east-central part of the state.

During his three-decade-long career at a county detention center, Rosekrans has been bitten twice by young offenders, one time so severely that he needed a month to recover. Another offender hit him in the stomach with a metal pan.

On one of his worst nights on the job, he took a call from a woman inquiring about the whereabouts of her husband. Rosekrans later learned that the 71-year-old man, a part-time driver for juvenile court, had been strangled and left for dead by a teen he was transporting back to Bay County after a psychiatric evaluation.

Because he got into scrapes growing up, Rosekrans decided to dedicate his life to helping other troubled young people through difficult times.

He even had the satisfaction of working for a time alongside a counselor who helped him. Today, former offenders sometimes approach Rosekrans in stores or on the street to say: “You made a difference.”

“That’s what makes it worth it,” said Rosekrans, who deserves the public’s gratitude, not pushback from ingrates like Hall.

Republicans in Michigan and other states watch Musk’s scorched-earth campaign against federal workers and then feel compelled to replicate the lunacy, he said, noting the attacks just serve to hollow out communities and contribute to a growing underclass of disadvantaged Americans.

“We are tax-paying citizens of your community,” said Rosekrans, citing the many other contributions of unionized public-sector workers. “We are the Little League baseball coaches. We are the PTA members. We give back.”