

WHEREAS, work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), including repetitive motion injuries, tendinitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, back injuries, and other disorders are the leading type of occupational injury and illness in the United States today; and

WHEREAS, for every reported MSD, another MSD goes unreported, bringing the total number of work-related MSDs estimated by OSHA to occur in the United States annually to 3.6 million; and

WHEREAS, these injuries cause disabling pain and suffering for millions of working people and their families each year; and

WHEREAS, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data show that for many types of MSDs involving the upper extremities, women workers suffer a disproportionate number of injuries, and nearly half of all injuries and illnesses among women workers result from ergonomic hazards; and

WHEREAS, BLS data show that meatpacking, poultry, food processing, grocery and health care workers—all industries represented by the UFCW—suffer higher MSD rates than workers in other sectors; and

WHEREAS, workers in the United States worked for and waited for more than a decade for an OSHA ergonomics standard to protect them from MSDs; and

WHEREAS, such a standard existed for less than four months before the Congress and the President rescinded it under the never before used Congressional Review Act; and

WHEREAS, this action ignored the massive record compiled by OSHA indicating an urgent need for an ergonomics standard; and

WHEREAS, this record includes the congressionally mandated January 2001 report of the National Academy of Sciences, Musculoskeletal Disorders and the

Workplace, which concluded that work-related MSDs are a serious national problem and that they are preventable; and

WHEREAS, this record includes documentation of ergonomics programs at UFCW represented workplaces that have successfully corrected hazards, decreased injury and illness rates, and lowered workers compensation and lost-time costs; and

WHEREAS, Washington State adopted a workplace ergonomics rule on May 26, 2000, and other states, including North Carolina, are considering doing the same; and

WHEREAS, the Occupational Safety and Health Act's stated goal is "to assure so far as possible every working man and woman in the Nation safe and healthful working conditions" and charges the Secretary of Labor with the duty to take action to accomplish this goal; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Labor is delaying any action on a new standard; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Labor has set aside a key provision in the Clinton administration's revised injury record-keeping rule that delays the recording of MSDs for one year; therefore be it:

RESOLVED that the AFL-CIO and its affiliates strongly urge the Department of Labor to promptly issue a proactive and preventive ergonomics standard under the OSHAct to protect workers from developing MSDs; and be it further

RESOLVED that union members encourage co-workers, friends, and family to write, call, fax, and e-mail their Senators, Congressional Representatives and the Secretary of Labor to demand a new standard; meet with politicians to confront them about Congress's repeal of the ergonomics standard; and write letters to the editor about the need for a new ergonomics standard; and be it further

RESOLVED that the AFL-CIO and its affiliates encourage implementation of additional state-wide ergonomics rules; and be it further

RESOLVED that the AFL-CIO and its affiliates urge local unions to file OSHA complaints about ergonomic hazards under the act's general duty clause,

Section 5(a)(1), and encourage union stewards and safety committee members to demand ergonomic job improvements on the shop floor, filing grievances as needed; and be it finally

RESOLVED that affiliate unions use contract negotiations to bargain for strong ergonomics programs and union-led ergonomics training.