



# CATHOLIC - LABOR NETWORK

[www.catholiclabor.org](http://www.catholiclabor.org)

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February 27, 2015

Mr. Gary Beevers  
USW International Vice President  
470 ORLEANS ST STE 900  
BEAUMONT TX 77701-3019

Dear Gary:

On behalf of the members of the Catholic Labor Network, an organization of Catholic laity, religious, and clergy committed to Catholic social teachings related to workers and workers' rights, we express our solidarity with you at this time of collective bargaining for a new national oil workers' contract.

We note that one of the key bargaining issues is safety. In a February 2 newspaper article you state:

*This work stoppage is about onerous overtime; unsafe staffing levels; dangerous conditions the industry continues to ignore; the daily occurrences of fires, emissions, leaks and explosions that threaten local communities without the industry doing much about it . . .*

Our focus on safety causes us to recount the terrible accident that took place in 2013 at a Bangladeshi clothing factory. When this massive building collapsed, 1,129 workers were killed, and 2,515 workers were injured. In response, Pope Francis stated in his April 28, 2013 Sunday Angelus:

*At this moment, a special moment, I wish to raise a prayer for the many victims caused by the tragic collapse of a factory in Bangladesh. I express my solidarity with and deepest sympathies to the families who are mourning their loved ones, and I address a strong appeal from my heart that the dignity and safety of the worker always be protected.*

The litany of killed and injured US oil workers and contract employees number in the

hundreds, though their names and faces are unknown and unremembered by Americans who pull up to their local filling station to fill-up their cars. These men and women have in fact given up their lives to provide the energy that makes our lives comfortable.

Many studies show that safety is compromised by inadequate training, a lack of familiarity in the workplace, and fatigue -- yet these firms continue to pursue excess profits by overworking their labor force and subcontracting work where possible to firms employing cheaper, less experienced workers who lack the protection of union membership. These issues of safety, fatigue, and contracting out jobs are all interconnected, and all directly relate to whether US energy workers come home at the end of their day, or they meet the same fate as the Bangladeshi clothing workers.

Know that all of you are in our prayers, and that at the end of this difficult time, our country will have a safer, more efficient energy sector that continues to provide the energy America needs.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Phil Tabbita". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "P" and a long, horizontal flourish at the end.

Phil Tabbita  
President  
Catholic Labor Network