

Workplace Safety

1 WHEREAS:

2 All workers deserve a workplace where they feel safe. Workplace violence has not only
3 increased in areas where we know this is a concern -- corrections, law enforcement and
4 behavioral health -- but in almost every occupation that works with the public: and

5 WHEREAS:

6 Workplace violence is not just limited to physical assault. It also includes near misses,
7 verbal abuse and sexual harassment. Even the fear of assault or witnessing an assault
8 on a co-worker can have serious impacts on the health and well-being of workers. This
9 trauma affects our members at the workplace but also in their lives outside of work
10 causing stress on relationships and families ; and

11 WHEREAS;

12 Victims of workplace violence have an increased risk of post-traumatic stress injury
13 (PTSI), a disorder common among combat veterans and victims of terrorism, crimes,
14 rape and other violent incidents. Workers often blame themselves when they are injured
15 in an assault, and management often encourages this self-blame; and

16 WHEREAS:

17 It is rare that these issues are dealt with effectively even in the short term. And there is
18 increasing evidence that victims and witnesses of violent incidents need long term
19 treatment and support to fully overcome these problems; and

20 WHEREAS:

21 Inadequate staffing levels and lack of training leads to increased incidents of violence;
22 and

23 WHEREAS:

24 First responders that file workers compensation claims for PTSI are almost always
25 unfairly denied.

26 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

27 That Oregon AFSCME Council 75 will propose staffing ratios at the bargaining table and
28 fight for legislation to address staffing shortages; and

29 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

30 That Oregon AFSCME Council 75 will utilize its resources to conduct safety
31 assessments of worksites with high incidents of assault; and

32 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

33 That Oregon AFSCME Council 75 will push for legislation to change the burden of proof
34 from the employee to the employer during worker comp decisions so that the impacted
35 employees are not further burdened to have to prove working conditions caused PTSI,
36 but instead, employers must prove working conditions did not cause PTSI; and

37 BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

38 That Oregon AFSCME will not allow these problems to persist without action and will
39 work with members to draw attention to this important safety issue with the public and
40 with elected officials.

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42 Submitted by: Oregon AFSCME Council 75 Executive Committee