

## Rep. Adams, Colleagues Join Union Workers to Announce Legislation to Protect Workers from Extreme Heat



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**WASHINGTON, DC—** Today, as Charlotte and North Carolina face another harsh heat wave, **Representative S. Alma Adams, Ph.D. (NC-12)** and House and Senate colleagues joined union workers from **United Farm Workers (UFW), American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), and United Steelworkers** to announce their bipartisan, bicameral legislation to implement federal enforceable workplace heat stress protections.

Rep. Adams was joined by **Senators Alex Padilla (D-CA) and Edward J. Markey (D-MA), and Representatives Judy Chu (CA-2) and Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (VA-03), Ranking Member of the House Committee on Education and Workforce.**

**The Asunción Valdivia Heat Illness, Injury and Fatality Prevention Act** would direct OSHA to establish a permanent federal standard to protect workers against excessive heat exposure at work, both in indoor and outdoor environments. The standard would include common-sense precautions, such as ensuring that workers who are in high-heat environments have paid breaks in shaded or climate-controlled spaces, providing cool water for proper hydration, and requiring emergency response and transportation for workers incurring heat-related illness.

According to OSHA, excessive heat officially caused the [deaths of 121 workers on the job](#) between 2017 and 2022 and is likely undercounted with heat-related deaths often misattributed to other causes in the workplace.

The bill is named in honor of Asunción Valdivia, who died from a workplace-related heat stroke in 2004 after picking grapes in California for ten straight hours in 105-degree temperatures. Mr. Valdivia fell unconscious and, instead of calling an ambulance, his employer told his son to drive Mr. Valdivia home. On his way home, he died of a preventable heat stroke at the age of 53.

“As we face record temperatures, it has never been more important that we protect our workers facing extreme heat in the workplace,” **said Congresswoman Adams.** “Last year, North Carolina postal worker Wendy Johnson lost her life to heat illness after spending hours in the back of a postal truck on a 95-degree day with no air conditioning. Her death was entirely preventable, and Wendy should still be with us today. I’m proud to introduce this bill so we can honor her memory and ensure every worker has the protections from extreme heat that Wendy deserved.”

“As we continue to experience record-breaking summer heat waves, we’re also seeing a distressing increase in cases of workers collapsing and even losing their lives due to excessive heat. I will never forget people like Asunción Valdivia or Esteban Chavez Jr., who passed away in Pasadena, California in 2022 after a day of delivering packages in 90-degree heat in a truck without air conditioning. Unfortunately, their tragic deaths were entirely preventable,” **said Rep. Chu.** “Whether on a farm, driving a truck, or working in a warehouse, workers like Asunción and Esteban keep our country running while enduring some of the most difficult conditions—often without access to water or rest. To protect our workforce and save lives, we must pass this bill into law and establish comprehensive and enforceable federal standards addressing heat stress on the job.”

“Asunción Valdivia’s death was completely preventable, yet his story is sadly not unique. As the planet continues to grow hotter, there is still no federally enforceable heat safety standard for workers. That’s not just dangerous for the farm workers and construction workers who work all day outside in the sun — it’s also dangerous for the factory and restaurant workers in boiling warehouses and kitchens,” **said Senator Padilla.** “Every family deserves to know that even on the hottest day, their loved one will come back home. A national heat safety standard would provide that peace of mind and finally give

workers the safety they deserve.”

“This summer, Americans across the country are grappling with some of the hottest temperatures on record. Yet workers in this country still have no legal protection against excessive heat—one of the oldest, most serious, and most common workplace hazards. Heat illness affects workers in our nation’s fields, warehouses, and factories, and climate change is making the problem more severe every year,” **said Ranking Member Scott, House Committee on Education and Workforce.** “This legislation will require OSHA to issue a heat standard on a much faster track than the normal OSHA regulatory process. I was proud to advance this important bill in 2022, and I urge Chairman Walberg and Committee Republicans to do so again this Congress. Workers deserve nothing less, particularly as heat-related illnesses and deaths rise.”

“Even as heat waves become more frequent, longer-lasting, and more severe, red state politicians are rolling back heat protections and child labor protections across the country. It’s not rocket science—you cannot be pro-worker if you are anti-heat protection,” **said Senator Markey.** “Our legislation would provide workers with basic, effective protections: access to water, access to shade, time limits on high heat exposure, and procedures for emergency medical response. Every worker deserves to know when they clock in that they will return home safe at the end of their shift. The thermometer is rising and the clock is ticking. Republicans want to sacrifice working Americans. Let’s save our workers instead.”

“From farmhands to construction workers, America’s essential workforce is doing important work while under extreme heat conditions,” **said Senator Cortez Masto.** “Temperatures continue to reach record highs in Nevada and across the United States. We must act now to protect our communities’ vital workers.”

The *Asunción Valdivia Heat Illness, Injury, and Fatality Prevention Act* has the support of a broad coalition of over 250 groups, including: Rural Coalition, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, AFL-CIO, UNITE HERE!, Communication Workers of America, Alianza Nacional de Campesinas, Sierra Club, United Farm Workers, Farmworker Justice, Public Citizen, International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers, United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, Union of Concerned Scientists, United Steelworkers, National Resources Defense Council, American Lung Association, and Health Partnerships.

“Too many workers – including AFSCME members – have lost their lives on the job as a result of blistering heat waves and record-breaking temperatures,” **said AFSCME President Lee Saunders.** “As the number of heat-related illnesses and fatalities continue to rise, it is well past time we adopt nationwide safeguards to better protect the workers who maintain our infrastructure, keep our streets clean, harvest our food, and keep our economy moving. We at AFSCME thank Senator Padilla and Representative Chu for introducing the Asunción Valdivia Heat Illness, Injury, and Fatality Prevention Act, which will ensure essential workers who brave the heat can do their jobs safely and effectively, and most importantly, make it home alive.”

“Everyone deserves safe working conditions, but powerful corporations have not done enough to protect their workers from hot working environments, exacerbated by the climate crisis,” **said Liz Shuler, President of the AFL-CIO.** “Extreme heat is increasingly causing indoor and outdoor workers to collapse or even die on the job, and our union family has already lost too many members to preventable, work-related heat illness. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) must issue a strong heat rule, not a weak one, to ensure workers have specific protections they need and to be able to raise unsafe working conditions without fear of retaliation.”

Full text of the bill is available [here](#).

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*Congresswoman Alma S. Adams, Ph.D. represents North Carolina's 12th Congressional District (Charlotte, Mecklenburg County) and serves on the House Committee on Agriculture and the House Committee on Education & Workforce, where she serves as ranking member of the Higher Education and Workforce Development (HEWD) Subcommittee.*

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