



# **2026 Workers Memorial Day Scholarship Essay Contest**

*Sponsored by the Connecticut AFL-CIO Health and Safety Committee*

Each year during Worker Memorial Day ceremonies on April 28<sup>th</sup>, workers, legislators, members of organized labor unions, worker advocates and others gather to honor the memory of those workers who have lost their lives because of workplace injuries or illnesses. The ceremonies highlight the sacrifices made by these workers and of the families left behind and inspire us all to work harder on behalf of the welfare of all workers.

The Connecticut AFL-CIO Health and Safety Committee, as part of its efforts to “mourn the dead but fight like hell for the living”, is offering a scholarship essay contest to inspire high school seniors to think about the importance of workplace health and safety, of the consequences that arise when workers are forced to toil in unsafe working conditions and of the role that organized labor has played in protecting workers both in the past and present.

In this year’s scholarship essay contest, Connecticut high school seniors who are the children or grandchildren of union members are asked to respond in **1,000** words or less to **ONE** of the three questions below with serious thought, some research (with cited sources), and, most importantly, awareness of the true cost of workplace hazards on the lives of workers.

**1st Prize: \$2,000**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: \$1,500**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Prize: \$1,000**

The winners of this contest will be asked to share a portion of their essay during our 2026 Worker Memorial Day event on Tuesday, April 28, 2026, at 12:00 pm, at the Bushnell Park Worker Memorial, Hartford.

In 1,000 words or less please respond to ONE of the following scenarios:

1. Discuss the risks that workers face in work zones due to dangerous drivers. In your essay, describe the consequences of unsafe actions on our roads, such as distracted driving and speeding, and suggest ways individuals, unions and communities can help promote a safer environment for workers on our roadways.
2. How does post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) affect public safety workers such as police officers, fire fighters, and correctional officers? Explain how repeated exposure to dangerous or traumatic situations can impact their mental health, job performance, and personal lives. In what ways can unions, workplaces, and governments help address this issue?
3. What impact does workplace violence have on health care workers? Discuss the physical, emotional, and professional effects of violence on nurses, doctors, and other types of health care workers. In your essay, describe how hospitals, unions, and governments can help prevent violence and better protect health care workers.

The completed essay and application must be received by April 1, 2026.

### **Rules & Requirements:**

- All essayists must be children or grandchildren of union members in the Connecticut AFL-CIO and must be seeking post-secondary education.
- All entries will be judged anonymously on content, originality and clarity of vision.
- Essays must be based on your original ideas and thoughts, guided by your personal experience and/or library or internet research.
- Library and internet research must be documented with the original source. Published sources must include the author, publication name, publication date, and page numbers. Internet sources must reference the complete URLs.
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) may not be used to write your essay. All essays submitted to the contest are subject to being scanned by AI content detectors, and essays using AI content will be disqualified.

Please refer any questions to Pamela Puchalski at [pamela@ctcosh.org](mailto:pamela@ctcosh.org).

Link to submit your application and essay:

**[bit.ly/2026wmd](https://bit.ly/2026wmd)**

***Note: You must have a free Google account to be able to submit the application & essay.***