

Thesis: The US should not allow more lenient workplace-pollution (than public) standards, because often workers (1) are not fully informed about higher risks; (2) impose the risks on innocent people, such as future generations; (3) receive no compensating wage differential (CWD) for risky jobs; (4) have faulty preferences for riskier work; and (5) ought not be able to trade their health for money.

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Argument 1: The US should not allow more lenient workplace standards, (1) because workers often are not fully informed about higher risks, and industry often covers up the risks (GAO 1999).

Objection 1: Argument 1 is questionable because unions and government regulators can inform workers of the risks, as Congress recently did, in the case of nuclear workers (Congress 1999).

Response 1: Objection 1 is questionable because US union membership is only 14-16 percent (Miller 1999, pp. 57-59), and government often fails in its regulatory capacity (GAO 1999).

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A2: The US should not allow more lenient workplace standards, (2) because often worker mutagenic risk is imposed on innocent people, such as future generations (Shrader-Frechette 2002, ch. 5).

O2: A2 is questionable because someone needs to do the risky work, or else the economy would suffer (Dorman 1996, pp. 26-28).

R2: O2 is questionable because human rights take precedence to economics, and because European nations also do risky work, but with very stringent workplace standards (Newton 1996, pp. 135-149).

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A3: The US should not allow more lenient workplace standards, (3) because often there is no CWD for workers in environmentally risky occupations (Leigh 1995, pp. 3-7, 215).

O3: A3 is questionable because many economists say there is a compensating wage differential, although it varies from occupation to occupation (Viscusi et al. 2000).

R3: O3 is questionable because although there is an average CWD, disaggregating CWD data shows it exists only for unionized, college-educated, or male workers (Shrader-Frechette 2002, Ch. 7).

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A4: The US should not allow more lenient workplace standards, (4) because workers often have faulty or irrational preferences for riskier work (Broome 1999, pp. 192-198).

O4: A4 is questionable because workers have the right to determine what jobs they want, and the market promotes efficient job-risk matchups (Viscusi et al. 2000, pp. 768-769).

R4: O4 is questionable because workers often are forced into jobs, not because of real preferences but because of economic hardship and low skill levels (Levenstein and Wooding 1997).

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A5: The US should not allow more lenient workplace standards, (5) because workers ought not be able to trade health for money, since only vulnerable people tend to do so (Leigh 1995, pp. 3-7, 215).

O5: A5 is questionable because such trades promote worker freedom (Viscusi et al. 2000, p. 766).

R5: O5 is questionable because even the courts recognize that paternalism and worker protection sometimes ought to take precedence over complete worker autonomy (Sellars 1997, p. 47).