



But just months after the standard's January 2001 effective date, Congress passed and President George W. Bush signed the rescission resolution, invalidating the standard and barring OSHA from ever issuing a substantially similar one. Dead. And buried.

Why should we care?

Because the scourge of WMSDs that this regulation was designed to mitigate hasn't subsided. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that musculoskeletal injuries are the nation's most prevalent occupational injury, totaling, in 2017, 34% of serious nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses in manufacturing. That's almost 350,000 cases in one year.

Each of these cases involves often severe, debilitating, long-term pain that is frequently managed with opioids. A recent American Industrial Hygiene Association paper notes, "Although many factors have contributed to the opioid crisis, the role of workplace musculoskeletal injuries has been overlooked."

Industry opposition to the ergonomics standard led to unabated painful musculoskeletal injuries, numbering hundreds of thousands each year. Those debilitating injuries fed the high incidence of opioid prescription, contributing undeniably to the crisis we face today.

In 2017 alone, opioids were involved in 47,600 overdose deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. How many of these deaths would have been prevented had a vigorously enforced ergonomic standard been permitted to survive?

Eugene Scalia was at the forefront of those actively fighting that ill-fated regulation two decades ago. Workers, their families and their communities now bear the awful consequences.

That's not the best credential for a future labor secretary.