



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 21, 2020

Contact:

Bridget Bartol | bbartol@skdknick.com | (954) 594-0689

Alaina Berner | aberner@skdknick.com | (703) 915-7032

COLORADO COMMUNITY GROUPS UFCW LOCAL 7, COLORADANS FOR THE COMMON GOOD, & TOWARDS JUSTICE CALL ON ATTORNEY GENERAL PHILIP WEISER TO PROTECT ESSENTIAL WORKERS

On the Heels of the Federal Government's Measly \$15,615 OSHA Fine on JBS, Labor, Legal, and Religious Leaders Call on the State's Chief Law Enforcement Officer to Investigate

DENVER – Today, the United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 7 (UFCW 7), Coloradans for the Common Good, and the nonprofit legal organization Towards Justice, call on Colorado Attorney General Philip Weiser in a [letter](#) to investigate JBS for its failure to protect their employees, their families, the public generally, and the State of Colorado from COVID-19, a task the federal government has failed to do.

Last week the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) fined JBS, a Brazilian meat-processing company with revenue of \$51.7 billion dollars in 2019, a mere \$15,615 dollars for failure to protect their workers at the Greeley plant from exposure to COVID-19 at the plant. This meager fine represents .00003% of JBS' revenue last year. As the [Greeley Tribune's Editorial Board](#) wrote in reaction, "it's the equivalent of fining someone making \$50,000 a year, one-and-a-half cents."

JBS' gross negligence is criminal and has left six plant workers and one JBS supervisor dead from COVID-19, which they all contracted at the plant during the same time period. During this time, UFCW Local 7 asked the company numerous times to do more to protect workers. These pleas were ignored, even as hundreds of workers flooded Greeley's emergency rooms sick with COVID-19. To date, as many as 305 JBS UFCW Local 7 workers have been infected with the virus. The negligence of the world's largest meat processing company, which OSHA has ignored, has forced Colorado to expend resources and has resulted in substantial emotional and financial devastation.

Colorado has a responsibility to protect all Coloradans. Under Colorado law, the Attorney General has the authority to investigate the misconduct by JBS, whose conduct constitutes a public nuisance, and the immediate legal authority to intervene and protect workers at JBS and throughout the state and to force JBS to bear some of the costs that it has forced its workers and the general public to bear.

Leaders of UFCW Local 7, Coloradans for the Common Good, and Towards Justice, issued the following statements:

“To be clear, the measly OSHA fine not only represents a failure by our federal government to protect workers, but it is also a slap in the face to the families of our six members who contracted the virus at the JBS plant and died,” said **Kim Cordova, President of UFCW Local 7**. “The Department of Labor has sent a clear message to corporate America and to JBS: it is OK to prioritize your extraordinary profits over the health and safety of working Coloradans. We are confident that Attorney General Weiser will investigate this criminal behavior on behalf of Coloradans and bring justice to our families of Weld County.”

“As faith, labor, and community leaders we urge Attorney General Weiser to investigate the situation at JBS that continues to afflict its workers and their families, who are members of our community,” said **Rev. Reagan Humber, Pastor of House for All Sinners and Saints and leader with Coloradans for the Common Good**. “The persistent life-threatening working conditions at JBS remind us that the Book of Exodus, in our Sacred Scriptures, begins with an account of the brutal and increasingly dangerous conditions under which the Israelites labored as slaves in Egypt. As with the ancient Israelites, today's meatpacking workers are fundamental to providing a vital product to society, while their employers profit from these dangerous tasks.”

“JBS workers—like many essential workers, communities of color, and immigrant and refugee populations—are being treated as disposable. Workers and family members have died. If we don't listen to those who cry out for justice, we enable the oppressors. Unfortunately, federal authorities like the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) have abandoned the workers. We urge Attorney General Weiser to join us now to liberate these Colorado workers from oppression,” continued **Rev. Reagan Humber**.

“The conditions JBS has subjected its essential workers to during the pandemic is a clear violation of Colorado law,” said **David Seligman, Esq., Executive Director of Towards Justice**. “Under Colorado's public nuisance law, Attorney General Weiser is within his power to investigate JBS' violations and their deadly consequences, not only on for workers, but for their families and the public generally. The Attorney General can demand that JBS pay for some of the extraordinary costs it has forced its workers, their families, and Weld County and Colorado's taxpayers to bear because of its violations. We urge Attorney General Weiser to intervene to protect workers and their communities from the ongoing threat of harm and to investigate JBS' failure to comply with established guidance and state public health orders, a direct violation of Colorado law.”

JBS should operate its Greeley plant safely and implement critical and legally-mandated safeguards of slowing the production lines so that workers can practice social distancing, as well as eliminate a harsh attendance points system and a culture of workplace fear that encourages workers to attend work when sick.

JBS' plant workers are Coloradans and human beings. The federal government has failed its legal and moral imperative to protect them. As advocates, organizers, and religious leaders, we implore the Office of the Colorado Attorney General to investigate JBS immediately.

[Read the entire letter here.](#)

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Photo Credit: UFCW Local 7

[Local 7](#), the largest Union in Colorado is affiliated with United Food and Commercial Workers International Union which represents over 1.3 million workers in the United States and Canada, and is one of the largest private sector Unions in North America. UFCW members work in a wide range of industries, including retail food, food processing, agriculture, retail sales, and health care.

[Coloradans for the Common Good](#) (formerly Colorado IAF) is a Broad-Based Organization in the Front Range comprised of congregations, unions, and civic organizations who share a concern for families and a passion for democracy and are led by their convictions, values, and faith to act for the common good.

[Towards Justice](#) is a nonprofit law firm that seeks to advance economic justice through impact litigation, strategic policy advocacy, and collaboration with workers.