



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
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CHRIS CHRISTIE  
*Governor*

KIM GUADAGNO  
*Lt. Governor*

HAROLD J WIRTHS  
*Acting Commissioner*

MEMORANDUM

May 11, 2010

To: All Judges and Attorneys

From: Peter J. Calderone, Director and Chief Judge

Subject: Workers' Compensation Centennial

In 1911, New Jersey was one of twelve states that enacted the first workers' compensation statutes in the country. Next year is the National Centennial on Workers' Compensation which will include a documentary celebrating this 100 year history, see attached.

We have been in contact with some of the other states that first enacted workers' compensation programs to develop both New Jersey and national recognition of the Workers' Compensation Centennial.

We are in the early stage of planning for the Centennial and would like to form a committee of judges, attorneys and workers' compensation professionals that would be interested in working for a New Jersey celebration and recognition of our workers' compensation history.

Please contact me with any suggestions, personal interest in participating on a Committee or other information to help in organizing Centennial recognition. The e-mail address is [peter.calderone@dol.state.nj.us](mailto:peter.calderone@dol.state.nj.us), the telephone number is 609-292-2414 and the fax number is 609-984-2515.

Attachment

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DIVISION OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION  
(609) 292-2515 · FAX (609) 984-2515

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# WORKERS' COMPENSATION

a PBS television event in conjunction with the  
**Workers' Compensation Centennial Commission**

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Workers at  
International  
Harvester's Milwaukee  
Works, circa 1901.



## **Making History: Celebrating 100 Years of Workers' Compensation**

This is a story that all Americans need to hear. It's a story that's never been told in a comprehensive way to a national TV audience. It's a story that began with immense human pain and suffering, transforming into a spirit of hope and compromise. It's about a legacy of cooperation and innovation. It's a story that continues to grow and evolve to this very day. It's time to make history again!

Americans are poised to celebrate 100 years of the U.S. workers' compensation law which recognized society's responsibility to the workplace and established workers' compensation as the first form of social insurance in American history.

This compelling story, beginning with its roots in the Wisconsin Progressive Era, will be told through the artistic lens of five-time

Emmy Award-winning producer Steven Boettcher. In conjunction with the Workers' Compensation Centennial Commission, Mr. Boettcher is proposing to air a one-hour, national PBS documentary to honor the Workers' Compensation Centennial on Labor Day 2011.

# Making History: Celebrating 100 Years of Workers' Compensation

A century ago, workers' compensation was a radical new idea in the United States. In 1911, a state law guaranteed sure and early compensation for work injuries. Wisconsin enacted the first law, and by the 1940s all the states had laws in effect. Today, workers' compensation continues to stand as a pillar within our economic system that benefits all Americans.

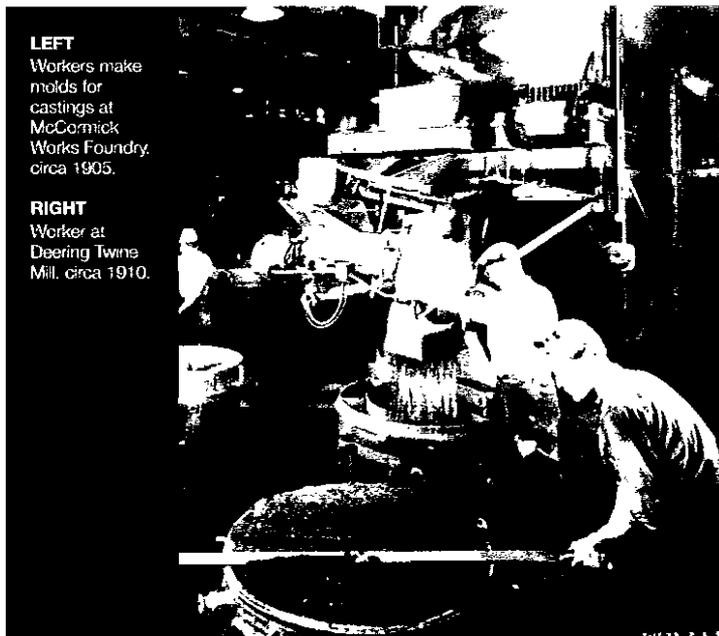
This revolutionary change was borne from the blood, sweat and tears of generations of American workers and their families. But it was also the fruit of enlightened business leaders and employers who came to better understand society's responsibility to workers.

Why did both employers and organized labor accept this change as "the Great Compromise?" To better appreciate this history of social progress, the PBS

*"This revolutionary change was borne from the blood, sweat and tears of generations of American workers, business leaders and employers."*

documentary will retrace conditions of industrial America from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to today.

Today, compensating workers for job injuries seems like common decency. However, in the early 1900s, society had a very different perspective of justice and the role of government. The new workers' compensation law was hammered out by visionaries who tried to bring compromise among deeply divided economic factions. There was a breathtaking gulf between labor and management that made today's "red state/blue state" political battles look like a trivial spat about the rules of a lawn game.



**LEFT**  
Workers make molds for castings at McCormick Works Foundry, circa 1905.

**RIGHT**  
Worker at Dearing Twine Mill, circa 1910.

