

Trump orders meat plants to remain open as worker deaths mount



Washington, April 30 (RHC)-- U.S. President Donald Trump has invoked the Defense Production Act to order meatpacking plants around the United States to remain open. Trump's executive order comes as U.S. beef, pork and poultry processing plants are linked to areas with the highest rates of coronavirus transmission in the country.

Trump's order declaring meat plants "critical infrastructure" came on Workers' Memorial Day, an international day of remembrance and action for workers killed or disabled on the job. At least 20 meatpacking workers have died from COVID-19, and thousands have fallen ill from the disease.

Trade unions say Trump's order fails to require on-the-job safety measures that will prevent further illness and death. In a statement, Stuart Appelbaum, president of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, said: "We only wish that this administration cared as much about the lives of working people as it does about meat, pork and poultry products."

This comes as some states, including Iowa and Texas, are warning workers they'll lose unemployment benefits if they refuse to return to the job when recalled after a layoff or furlough -- even if those workers

are concerned about contracting the coronavirus on the job.

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