The Past – The Timeline in History (Flow Chart Key)

Write a brief summary of the milestones which occurred in Child Labor Reform and the U.S. Labor Movement time period from 1832 to 1938.

1832- New England unions condemn child labor: the New England Association of Farmers, Mechanics and Other Workingmen resolve that “Children should not be allowed to labor in the factories from morning till night, without any time for healthy recreation and mental culture,” for it “endangers their . . . well-being and health”.

1836- Early trade unions propose state minimum age laws: union members at the National Trades’ Union Convention make the first formal, public proposal recommending that states establish minimum ages for factory work.

1842- States begin limiting children’s work days: Massachusetts limits children’s work days to 10 hours; other states soon pass similar laws—but most of these laws are not consistently enforced.

1876- Labor movement urges minimum age law: Working Men’s Party proposes banning the employment of children under the age of 14.

1881- Newly formed AFL supports state minimum age laws: the first national convention of the American Federation of Labor passes a resolution calling on states to ban children under 14 from all gainful employment.


1892- Democrats adopt union recommendations: Democratic Party adopts platform plank based on union recommendations to ban factory employment for children under 15.

1904- National Child Labor Committee forms: aggressive national campaign for federal child labor law reform begins.

1916- New federal law sanctions state violators: first federal child labor law prohibits movement of goods across state lines if minimum age laws are violated (law in effect only until 1918, when it’s declared unconstitutional, then revised, passed, and declared unconstitutional again).

1924- First attempt to gain federal regulation fails: Congress passes a constitutional amendment giving the federal government authority to regulate child labor, but too few states ratify it and it never takes effect.

1936- Federal purchasing law passes: Walsh-Healey Act states that the U.S. government will not purchase goods made by underage children.

1937- Second attempt to gain federal regulation fails: second attempt to ratify constitutional amendment giving federal government authority to regulate child labor falls just short of getting necessary votes.
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1937-New federal law sanctions growers: Sugar Act makes sugar beet growers ineligible for benefit payments if they violate state minimum age and hours of work standards.

1938-Federal regulation of child labor achieved in Fair Labor Standards Act: for the first time, minimum ages of employment and hours of work for children are regulated by federal law.