



November 23, 2020

Dear President-Elect Biden:

As co-chairs and participating organizations of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights' Employment Task Force, we write to share our views concerning the qualifications for the next U.S. Secretary of Labor.

Ensuring the protection and advancement of the rights, economic security, and well-being of all working people in this country is a priority of The Leadership Conference. The Employment Task Force works to promote policies that support the needs of the current and future workforce, including by strengthening and expanding protections against discrimination and harassment in the workplace and providing for the health and safety of working people.

As an initial matter, we want to underscore that appointees should represent the rich diversity of our nation. We applaud your stated commitment to promote diversity and accountability in leadership across key positions in the federal government, and urge you to make appointments that reflect a breadth of diversity with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, and socioeconomic status, as well as educational, experiential, and professional backgrounds.

It is imperative that the next Secretary of Labor be a champion for working people, demonstrate a deep understanding of the systemic barriers to equal opportunity faced by historically marginalized communities, and have a record of advocating for the civil rights of all working people. The communities we represent have been hard hit by the policies of the outgoing administration, which served to exacerbate existing inequalities that have long posed barriers to obtaining good jobs — those that pay fair wages, offer reasonable benefits and safe working conditions, and ensure the dignity of working people. Now, in the middle of an ongoing global health pandemic, economic crisis, and renewed reckoning with racism, sexism, and inequity in American society, including in our workplaces, the role of the Secretary of Labor could not be more critical.

The Secretary of Labor plays a key role in implementing and strengthening workplace protections and improving economic opportunities for working people. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported just over 11 million unemployed persons in the United States in October, nearly twice as many people than in February 2020 before the pandemic struck. Structural racism and longstanding gender inequities have made the crisis worse for people of color and women. Black, Latino, and Asian workers continue to experience more job loss than White workers, and Black women and Latinas are experiencing historically high unemployment rates. Protecting individuals from workplace discrimination and ensuring equal access to opportunities is of paramount importance during a time of economic crisis and job loss. For those workers still on the job, the pandemic has posed different challenges, including

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increased caregiving responsibilities, and for those who cannot telework or must interact with the public, increased risk of exposure to the coronavirus. Yet, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration has failed to issue an enforceable emergency standard to protect workers from COVID-19, essentially failing to adequately protect the nation's essential workers who are disproportionately people of color, women, and immigrants. The situation is especially dire for low-wage workers, those without access to unions, and working people without access to healthcare benefits, paid leave, childcare, and other support.

The current crisis demands that the next Secretary of Labor, as the nation's top official charged with advocating for working people, possess:

- A demonstrated commitment to advancing the rights and interests of working people.
- A demonstrated understanding of the impact of systemic racism on working people of color, including an understanding of the differing impacts on working people with intersecting identities, and a commitment to policymaking that seeks to undo the harm caused by systemic racism and promote equal opportunities.
- The ability to manage and lead diverse staff and promote equity and inclusion throughout the federal government.
- A track record of successfully working with grassroots organizations, particularly those led by people of color.
- A vision for creating jobs that provide fair wages and benefits, offer safe working conditions, and are free from harassment and discrimination.
- Significant experience enforcing federal anti-discrimination, employment, and labor laws on behalf of working people.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our views on qualifications for the next U.S. Secretary of Labor and look forward to working with your administration to build an America as good as its ideals. If you have any questions, please contact Gaylynn Burroughs, senior policy counsel at The Leadership Conference, at [burroughs@civilrights.org](mailto:burroughs@civilrights.org) — or the co-chairs of the Employment Task Force: Dariely Rodriguez, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, at [drodriguez@lawyerscommittee.org](mailto:drodriguez@lawyerscommittee.org) and Erika Moritsugu, National Partnership for Women & Families, at [emoritsugu@nationalpartnership.org](mailto:emoritsugu@nationalpartnership.org).

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
American Association of University Women (AAUW)  
Justice for Migrant Women  
NAACP  
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc  
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities  
National Domestic Workers Alliance  
National Employment Law Project

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National Organization for Women  
National Women's Law Center  
Oxfam America  
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Workplace Fairness