

What a Biden Administration Means for Workers: Health and Safety

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Labor Education Action Research Network
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Relations



Just for Context – The Lowlights of the Past 4 Years

- Aggressive deregulatory agenda.
- No political head of OSHA as the Senate never voted on the nomination.
- Number of federal OSHA compliance inspectors declined significantly and is at the lowest level since the early 1970s when the agency opened.
- Lies and misinformation about the dangers posed by the coronavirus and actually undermined efforts to contain it.



What Can We Expect?

Labor Once Again Has A Voice!

- Biden campaign convened working groups over the summer
 - Union representatives
 - Former Labor Department officials from the Obama years
 - Nonprofits and local groups
- Created a set of recommendations to reboot the agency's approach to worker safety and health.



Who's In Charge?

Jim Fredrick - Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA

- Three decades of work to improve worker health and safety, including 25 years in the United Steel Worker's health, safety and environment department.



Other Friends in High Places

Joseph (Chip) Hughes Jr. - Deputy Assistant Secretary for Pandemic and Emergency Response for OSHA

- Previous director of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences Worker Education and Training Program, which provided grants to unions, companies and nonprofits to train rank-and-file workers on occupational health and safety.

Ann Rosenthal - Senior Advisor

- Associate Solicitor for OSHA at the Department of Labor until 2017. She spent her entire legal career focusing on protecting the safety and health of American workers.



What We Know Now ... Priorities

- **Emergency Temporary Standard**
 - Will require employers to protect workers from COVID-19. Expect around March.
- **More OSHA inspectors**
 - This was a Biden campaign promise and he called on the agency to “double the number of OSHA investigators to enforce the law and existing standards and guidelines”.
- **“Regulation by Shaming”** - Aggressive enforcement deterrence policy to encourage elimination of life-threatening hazards by publicizing the names of violators, especially when their actions place the safety and health of workers in danger.



What We Know Now ... Priorities

- **Moving the 25** pending, proposed OSHA standard updates in various stages of approval.
- **Pandemic Response Plan and the Creation a White House COVID-19 Response Team.**
 - The Team will work to ensure that testing materials, support for contact tracing, and vaccinations are equitably distributed.
 - Expanding the testing efforts
 - Using the FEMA structure to set up thousands of vaccination sites
 - Mobilizing the National Guard to staff the effort
 - Expanding who can deliver the vaccine and call up retired medical personnel to aid the campaign.
 - Expanding resources for mental health services.
 - Using the Defense Production Act to ramp up production of PPE.

But, most of all, relying on actual SCIENCE to drive the response.

