



SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE, SUBCOMMITTEE ON LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES,
EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES

“THE PRESIDENT’S FISCAL YEAR 2022 BUDGET REQUEST FOR THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR”

July 14, 2021 – 10:00AM

OVERVIEW

On Wednesday, July 14, 2021, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies held a hearing entitled, “The President’s Fiscal Year 2022 Budget for the United States Department of Labor.” During the hearing, Members discussed: the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA); workforce development programs; apprenticeships; the Short-Time Compensation program (STC); H-2B visas; Department of Labor funding; and unemployment.

OPENING STATEMENTS

- [Chair Patty Murray \(D-WA\)](#)
- [Ranking Member Roy Blunt \(R-MO\)](#)

WITNESS PANEL

- [The Honorable Martin J. Walsh](#) – Secretary, Department of Labor

QUESTION AND ANSWER SUMMARY

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

Chair Patty Murray (D-WA) inquired how the Department of Labor (DOL) plans to use funding from the American Rescue Plan (ARP) to hire staff at the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Mr. Walsh stated the DOL is currently in the process of hiring inspectors at OSHA. He explained the goal is for OSHA be proactive and create safer work sites rather than simply respond to accidents. Chair Murray questioned why additional funding is necessary for OSHA beyond the allocated ARP funds. Mr. Walsh explained the ARP funds help OSHA restore resources and hire staff needed over the past five years while new funding is necessary to expand the office and collaborate with businesses to ensure safe work environments.

Chair Murray questioned why OSHA has insufficient staff to investigate complaints. Mr. Walsh echoed these concerns and committed to doubling the number by the end of the Biden Administration. He also stated ARP funding and increased investments will assist with hiring staff and enhancing inspector investigations.

Sen. Mike Braun (R-IN) questioned whether there has been an uptick in OSHA related cases that warrants an increase in enforcement funding. Mr. Walsh pointed to OSHA's increase in case load and decrease in inspectors. He argued, "OSHA should work in collaboration with workplaces to ensure proper safety protocols, rather than respond to tragedy." He explained the increased funding will help "build back" the DOL and OSHA.

Workforce Development Programs

Ranking Member Blunt asked what actions the Secretaries of Labor and Education are taking to close the "job information gap" that Americans are experiencing. Mr. Walsh explained the Secretaries are working on identifying information gaps and developing ideas for educational programs in primary school and community college to address employee needs. He asserted the funding for workforce development grants must be used and distributed intentionally to prepare employees for the future economy. He also emphasized the importance of collaboration between the Secretaries of Labor, Education, and Commerce, as well as bipartisan support from Congress.

Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI) questioned whether the DOL will support apprenticeships at the Department of Defense (DOD) in non-computer-based jobs. Mr. Walsh stated it is incumbent upon the DOL to ensure the funding for workforce development grants and apprenticeship programs is distributed appropriately to increase training and economic opportunity for workers.

Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) asked about the importance of the Job Corps. Mr. Walsh stated the Job Corps has been a "mainstay in opportunity for economic development and job growth." He highlighted the DOL's increased budget request to ensure the Job Corps is successful in all areas.

Chair Murray inquired why the increase in funding for workforce development programs is vital as well as how the budget will address inequities in the programs. Mr. Walsh noted the investment in workforce development programs will continue to advance the Biden Administration's Build Back Better agenda. He argued that every dollar spent in workforce development is an investment in the future of America's workforce. He also added that emerging industries provide opportunities for employees looking to train in non-traditional job markets.

Apprenticeships

Ranking Member Roy Blunt (R-MO) inquired how Congress and the DOL can expand apprenticeship opportunities in non-traditional fields. Mr. Walsh noted the DOL has begun conversations with biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies to discuss how these industries can create pathways for apprenticeship opportunities.

Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) asked whether the DOL will use appropriated funds to attract more racially diverse apprentices. Mr. Walsh emphasized the importance of providing access to apprenticeship opportunities for all individuals. He also highlighted the DOL's commitment to equity in all programs.

Short-Time Compensation Program (STC)

Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI) inquired how the DOL will continue to support and expand the Short-Time Compensation Program (STC). Mr. Walsh expressed support for work-sharing programs and committed to expand the program and increase participation.

H-2B Program

Sen. Shaheen questioned how the Biden Administration determined the availability of 22,000 H-2B visas and why 16,000 visas were only available for returning workers. Mr. Walsh explained the visa evaluation was based on past practice and

the average distribution over the last three years. He also pledged the DOL and Department of Homeland Security will work to develop a better formula for visa distribution next year.

Ranking Member Blunt asked Secretary Walsh to commit to working with the Subcommittee to ensure the H-2B program is sufficient for returning workers to meet the seasonal needs of small businesses. Mr. Walsh committed to working with the Committee on this issue and emphasized the benefits of access to employment for workers and employers.

Department of Labor Funding

Sen. John Kennedy (R-LA) questioned why Congress should appropriate additional funding to the DOL instead of allocating the funding for infrastructure investment. Mr. Walsh argued the \$1.7 billion increase is an “infrastructure investment” in the American worker.

Unemployment

Sen. Baldwin asked Secretary Walsh to discuss the proposed formula changes that determine the funding states receive to administer unemployment. Mr. Walsh explained the DOL is focused on creating a system that is efficient, addresses fraud through ID verification, modernizes technology, and implements a comprehensive approach for all states to administer unemployment.

Please click [here](#) for the archived hearing.