



WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

December 14, 2020

Please Visit our Website at: www.uscmwdc.org

Less than two weeks before Congress takes its Christmas Recess; House plans to adjourn on December 17.

Washington Update:

Appropriations/Coronavirus Stimulus Package

On Friday, December 11, the Senate passed a one-week funding bill by voice vote to avert a government shutdown at midnight. The last-minute agreement came after a number of senators dropped efforts to tack on other provisions to the bill. This gives negotiators more time to try and finalize talks on a \$1.4 trillion omnibus spending package that would give much needed pandemic aid to millions of Americans. Senators Bernie Sanders (VT) and Josh Hawley (MO) both pushed for a vote to include another round of stimulus checks.

The stopgap pushes the government funding deadline to Friday, December 18, giving negotiators little time to finalize the omnibus and a fiscal stimulus deal. Congressional leaders are trying to secure billions of dollars in pandemic aid, which they want to attach to an omnibus agreement. Congressional appropriators have signaled they are close to finalizing the \$1.4 trillion funding deal, but are still negotiating \$12.5 billion for a veterans health care program. Four committees have announced agreement on surprise medical billing legislation, and a bipartisan group of lawmakers is expected to release the legislative text of a two-part \$908 billion coronavirus stimulus measure today.

Labor Secretary

On December 1, Reuters reported that U.S. Representative Abby Finkenauer (IA), who has personal and political connections to President-elect Joe Biden, is being considered for Secretary of Labor in his administration. The field for DOL Secretary is wide and growing.

California Labor Secretary Julie Su, a longtime advocate for low-wage workers, continues to be in serious contention, but the list of contenders is currently at 9. Dozens of immigration and labor organizations, led by the National Immigration Law Center, sent a support letter to Biden's team on December 4 voicing their support for Su. In addition, Senator Mazie Hirono (HI), one of only three Asian American senators, sent Biden a letter of endorsement last Wednesday calling Su "the best of what this country can be."

On Tuesday, December 8, New York Times reporter Jim Tankersley claimed that Patrick Gaspard, a U.S. ambassador to South Africa, is the 'leading candidate' for President-elect Joe Biden's Secretary of Labor. Other names in the ring include: Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders; Representative Andy Levin (MI); Boston Mayor Marty Walsh (although he has indicated he looks forward to working with the Biden administration "as mayor for the many years to come"); Sharon Block, Executive Director of the Labor and Worklife Program at Harvard Law School; William Spriggs, AFL-CIO Chief Economist; and Seth Harris, former Deputy Labor Secretary under Obama, who is part of the current DOL agency review team.

[Click here](#) to read the Su support letter.

House Education and Labor Committee

On Tuesday, December 8, Democrats on the House Education and Labor Committee released the report "The Future of Work: How Congress Can Support Workers in the Modern Economy," which advocates for several progressive labor issues, including passage of the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, while more broadly aiming to preserve worker protections, improve workforce development, and protect workers' civil rights in the digital age.

[Click here](#) to access the report.

Initial Jobless Claims

In the week ending December 5, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims was 853,000, an increase of 137,000 from the previous week's revised level. The previous week's level was revised up by 4,000 from 712,000 to 716,000. The 4-week moving average was 776,000, an increase of 35,500 from the previous week's revised average. The previous week's average was revised up by 1,000 from 739,500 to 740,500. The advance seasonally adjusted insured unemployment rate was 3.9 percent for the week ending November 28, an increase of 0.1 percentage point from the previous week's unrevised rate.

[Click here](#) to access the full report.

DOL/ETA

TEGL: Pay for Performance Guidance for WIOA Title I, Subtitle B

On Monday, December 7, the Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA) released the Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) *Pay for Performance (PFP) Guidance for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) title I, subtitle B* to provide guidance on PFP for state and local WIOA title I, subtitle B programs that implement PFP contract strategies. The implementation of “Pay for Performance” strategies was a Republican-led priority in the 2014 reauthorization of WIOA and was included in the SKILLS Act. DOL’s guidance states that WIOA funds are allowed to be used for “Pay for Performance” contract strategies and related activities at the local level. It also clarifies that states may use the Governor’s Reserve funds on “Pay for Performance” activities.

[Click here](#) to read the full guidance.

TEN: Public Workforce System Role in Reopening State and Local Economies

On Thursday, December 10, the Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA) released the Training and Employment Notice (TEN) *Public Workforce System Role in Reopening State and Local Economies* to provide information to states and local areas regarding the role of the public workforce system in assisting businesses and job seekers as economies reopen following closures related to COVID-19 pandemic begin to refocus attention on the 6.5 million job postings and the public workforce system’s role in filling those vacancies, and to emphasize the

availability of resources through WorkforceGPS, “Pathway to Recovery” page, which is dedicated to economic recovery topics.

[Click here](#) to read the full TEN.

WDC in the News

Most State Unemployment Websites Fail Mobile and Accessibility Tests

In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, nearly 17 million Americans have filed for unemployment benefits, including approximately 5 million in the last week. Facing stay-at-home orders and physical distancing measures, many workers have applied for unemployment benefits online. Unfortunately, many of the government websites they attempted to use have not been working. Indeed, an ITIF analysis found that at least 26 state government unemployment websites have crashed. And more than 54 percent of the initial unemployment claims filed in the United States during the week ending April 4 were from individuals in states with unemployment websites that had crashed. These crashes have made it more difficult for individuals to apply for and receive benefits. Moreover, many of these websites are not optimized for people using mobile devices. This is a significant issue because roughly 20 percent of Americans access the Internet at home only via a mobile device, and during the pandemic, they do not have other options, such as going to a library. Some websites explicitly note that they do not work on mobile devices.

[Click here](#) to read the full report.

WorkingNation American Workers Survey

How do American workers view their job and career prospects? What do they think about the skills they already have and how to get the ones they may need most? In October, WorkingNation released their first *WorkingNation American Workers Survey*, which reports findings on these questions and implications for workers, employers, students, and educators.

[Click here](#) to access the survey.

Reports & Articles

New from Aspen Institute

Moving Beyond Gratitude: Opportunities to Improve Essential Work

Among the many unexpected lessons of 2020 was a recognition of the importance of essential workers. We saw how much we rely on the people who work in our food systems, who care for our children and our loved ones, who deliver packages, and who keep our public spaces clean. We learned to say thank you to so many of them, and in this season of thanks, we will come together to reflect on how we can do more than say thank you by improving the quality of essential jobs. As the year draws to a close, join the Aspen Institute for its virtual discussion on the important role of essential workers in our economy and society and a variety of approaches for improving essential work.

[Click here](#) to register for the webinar.

Fast Fact

According to a recent survey, on average, remote employees worked an extra 26 hours each month during COVID (nearly an extra day every week).



THE U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
