

White House Task Force Releases Pro-Union Recommendations

The White House Task Force on Worker Organizing and Empowerment released a strikingly pro-union report with 70 recommendations “that, when implemented, will promote worker organizing and collective bargaining for federal employees and workers employed by public and private-sector employers.”

The Task Force, chaired by Vice President Kamala Harris and U.S. Secretary of Labor Martin Walsh, was created by President Joe Biden in April 2021. Its members include more than 20 Cabinet members and heads of other federal agencies.

The sweeping recommendations included in this new report have the potential to impact your organization, your employees, your customers, and your vendors whether you are an employer who provides federal contract services and interacts with state and federal agencies or you are entirely operating in the private sector with no government interaction.

Throughout the report, there are numerous mentions of the “private sector” and its employees, including [a chart showing a comparison between private-sector and public-sector employee union membership rates over the last 90 years](#). The graphic illustrates that union membership has declined steadily in the private sector, while union membership in the public sector has remained fairly constant since the 1970s.

The stated goal of the report is to “remove longstanding barriers to (union) organizing.” Report recommendations are designed to do three things:

- 1 Position the federal government as a model actor.
- 2 Use the federal government’s authority to support worker empowerment by providing information, improving transparency, and making sure existing pro-worker services are delivered in a timely and helpful manner.
- 3 Use longstanding authority to leverage the federal government’s purchasing and spending power to support workers who are organizing and pro-worker employers.

At the federal level, the report recommends that federal agencies give more information about unions to new hires, informing employees about their collective bargaining rights and representation and increasing the ability of unions to communicate with employees, such as providing unions with work email addresses and access to physical and electronic bulletin boards.

The proposal directly addresses private-sector efforts that should be undertaken, including tightening reporting procedures, overseen by the Department of Labor, around disclosure requirements for companies that enlist the support of outside resources.

The report also recommends that the Department of Labor and other labor-focused departments and agencies like the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) undertake a public relations campaign to better notify workers of their rights and that other departments like the Treasury Department explore more ways to reduce the cost of union dues by increasing their eligibility as tax deductions.

It also calls for better coordination between the Department of Labor and the NLRB when workers file claims of retaliation for union organizing and more guidelines at the Department of Homeland Security for making sure that its policies ensure victims and witnesses of labor exploitation are not afraid to cooperate with enforcement agencies despite their immigration status.

Provisions in the report also call for the General Services Administration, Department of Interior, Department of Defense and the Office of Budget and Administration to allow union organizers, “to talk with employees on federal property about the benefits of union organizing. This will include both federal employees and private sector employees of federal contractors.”

This effort by the Biden administration is an effort to support and strengthen unions and union organizing in the U.S. These policy recommendations are an alternative to already proposed legislative measures like the PRO (Protecting the Right to Organize) Act, which we’ve written about [here](#) and [here](#). The PRO Act passed the House of Representatives on March 9, 2021, but there has been no action on that legislation since then.

The report doesn’t mention any companies by name, but it talks about “Meeting the Moment” and reiterates [President Biden’s support for Amazon workers attempting to organize in Alabama](#).

As an organization, there are many things you should be doing now to prepare as these policies are rolled out at various government agencies across the country. Some of those include, but are not limited to:

- 1 Educate Your Executive Team, Board Members and Other Stakeholders
- 2 Assess your current state of readiness and update your strategic plan as necessary
- 3 Engage Your Public Affairs, Communications and Government Relations Staff
- 4 Develop Your Internal Team of Experts
- 5 Provide Labor Relations Training and Updates to Your HR Professionals
- 6 Engage Your Managers to Talk to Employees about Their Rights

Have questions about how to proceed?

Contact IRI at (313) 965-0350 for more information.