



COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION & LABOR
REPUBLICANS

COMMITTEE
STATEMENT

**Opening Statement of Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), Republican Leader
Committee on Education and Labor Hearing:
“Examining the Policies and Priorities of the Department of Labor”
May 1, 2019**

“Thank you, Secretary Acosta, for coming before the Committee today. It’s a pleasure having you here to talk about the Department of Labor’s policies and priorities on the heels of such excellent news about the booming U.S. economy.

With record-low unemployment and a job seekers’ market, it’s a good time to be an American worker. The Department of Labor is responsible for keeping many commitments to the American workforce, and it’s my hope that today we will hear more about the Department’s efforts to prepare workers, ensure that men and women are protected on the job, and the Department’s work to fuel our continued economic growth.

Right now, there are more than 7 million unfilled jobs in the United States, many of which remain open because there aren’t enough workers with the necessary skills to fill them. It’s predicted that by 2022, we will have a shortage of 11 million workers who will not have the necessary education to thrive in the economy. This is an urgent concern, and we need workforce development solutions that connect disenfranchised workers with the skills they need to fill good-paying, in-demand jobs.

Over the last several years, Committee Republicans have worked hard on legislation to improve our national workforce development efforts and expand on-the-job learning opportunities to help workers gain the skills they need to succeed in the workforce. In 2014, the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* became law, and last year, we sent the *Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act* to the President’s desk where it received his

signature. These laws address ways to fill job vacancies at the local level and strengthen students' access to apprenticeships and other on-the-job learning opportunities. It is our hope that you will use your authority to supplement these efforts to help the American workforce flourish.

In conjunction with Department efforts to prepare workers, it's important for Committee Members to learn about what actions the Department is taking to safeguard workers and wisely steward taxpayer dollars. Contrary to Democrats' claims, it is possible to protect and promote the wellbeing of workers while being fiscally responsible, and the President's FY 2020 budget proposal for the Department of Labor does just that by vigorously enforcing labor laws and proposing important cost-saving measures wherever possible. The Department's policy of strong enforcement paired with enhanced compliance assistance is an especially effective way of protecting workers and bringing businesses into full compliance. This approach is a complete departure from the previous administration's policy of treating employers as adversaries instead of partners.

DOL should also be commended for seeking opportunities to strengthen union transparency, ensure compliance with wage and hour laws, enhance retirement security, and expand access to affordable health care options for job creators and workers. These efforts paired with the Department's deregulatory agenda have already helped drive the surge of economic growth we see today. These policies will be key to ensuring the economy's continued progress, too.

To date, the U.S. economy has added jobs for more than 100 consecutive months, and since President Trump assumed office, the number of job opportunities available across the country has grown from 5.6 million to more than 7 million. Unemployment recently hit its lowest point in 49 years and wages are up and experiencing sustainable, organic growth thanks to the Republican *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act* and sweeping deregulation over the last two years, much of which has come from the Department of Labor. Median weekly earnings are up more than 30 percent for Latino and Asian workers and more than 20 percent for Black and White workers since the end of 2007. This progress cannot be overstated, and it's vital that the Secretary champion policies that keep this momentum going.

Secretary Acosta, you have been dedicated in your leadership of the Department of Labor, and I hope we can remain focused today on what matters most: securing greater opportunities and prosperity for American workers.”

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