

President-Elect Biden Nominates Marty Walsh for Secretary of Labor

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On January 7, 2021, President-elect Joe Biden announced Boston Mayor Marty Walsh as his nominee for Secretary of Labor. If confirmed, Mayor Walsh would represent a stark contrast to incumbent Labor Secretary, longtime management attorney Eugene Scalia. Walsh served as the president of Laborers' Union Local 223 prior to being elected Mayor. AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka publicly endorsed Walsh for the position of Labor Secretary and praised the selection, underscoring Walsh's background in organized labor.

As Secretary of Labor, Walsh will presumably be tasked with helping to implement a number of [Biden administration policy changes](#), including with respect to wages, pay equity, paid leave, and workplace safety. Among his first duties will be aiding the federal government's continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A look into Walsh's tenure as Mayor of Boston may provide some insight into what employers can expect from him as Labor Secretary.

1. Boston's COVID-19 Response

Boston, one of many cities hit hard by COVID-19, has consistently been more conservative than Massachusetts as a whole in its reopening plans. Over the course of the pandemic, Boston has typically been slower to increase office capacity limits and to permit reopening of certain businesses like fitness centers and dining establishments. Boston has also introduced free, asymptotic COVID-19 testing in its efforts to contain the spread of the virus.

2. Ties to Organized Labor

Walsh's background in union leadership is certain to influence his priorities as Labor Secretary. Following President-elect Biden's announcement, Walsh tweeted, "Working people, labor unions, and those fighting every day for their shot at the middle class are the backbone of our economy and of this country. As Secretary of Labor, I'll work just as hard for you as you do for your families and livelihoods."

3. \$15 Minimum Wage and Paid Family and Medical Leave

Massachusetts recently began offering paid family and medical leave benefits, and is on its way to mandating a \$15 minimum wage (which it will do on January 1, 2023, with gradual increases each year until then). Mayor Walsh was a strong supporter of both efforts.

We expect a flurry of activity from the Biden administration's Labor Department in the months to come. Subscribe to Proskauer's [Law and the Workplace](#) and [Labor Relations Update](#) blogs to stay current on the latest developments impacting your business.

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