

President Biden Plans to Nominate Chief of Cal/OSHA to Head the Occupational Safety and Health Administration

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On April 9, 2021, President Biden [announced](#) that he intends to nominate Doug Parker as the assistant secretary of labor for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Since September 2019, Mr. Parker has been the chief of the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health, known as Cal/OSHA, which enforces California's safety and health regulations at worksites in California. In that role, he has overseen the drafting, implementation, and enforcement of Cal/OSHA's Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS). Cal/OSHA's COVID-19 ETS is widely considered the most robust COVID-19 safety and health standard in the country, as it requires employers to, among other things, implement a COVID-19 prevention program, offer testing to employees in the event of COVID-19 exposure at the workplace, and provide multiple rounds of testing in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak at a workplace.

In January 2021, Mr. Parker was a guest on Greenberg Traurig's OSHA Practice Group's podcast, Workplace Safety Review, where he discussed, among other things, Cal/OSHA's ETS. [Click here to listen to the podcast episode with Doug Parker.](#)

Before becoming chief of Cal/OSHA, Parker was the executive director of Worksafe, a legal services provider in Oakland, California. Mr. Parker is also no stranger to Washington D.C., having served as deputy assistant secretary of policy and a senior policy advisor at the Mine Safety and Health Administration during the Obama administration. Before that, Mr. Parker was a partner at a law firm in Washington, D.C. and a staff attorney for the United Mine Workers of America.

OSHA has not had a Senate-confirmed leader since Dr. David Michaels' departure at the end of President Obama's administration in January 2017. In October 2017, President Donald Trump nominated Scott Mungo, vice president of Safety for FedEx, but Mungo withdrew his nomination in May 2019. Because there was no Senate-confirmed leader of OSHA, deputy assistant secretary of labor Loren Sweatt led the agency from July 2017, stepping down before President Biden's inauguration. On Jan. 20, 2021, President Biden installed James Frederick as deputy assistant secretary of labor for OSHA, and Mr. Frederick has run the agency since. He will continue running the agency until Mr. Parker is confirmed to his post.

Although President Biden has announced his intention to nominate Mr. Parker, it is not yet clear when the Senate would hold a hearing on the nomination. However, given Democrat control of the Senate and President Biden's stated focus of increasing enforcement on workplace health and safety – including related to COVID-19-related hazards – Mr. Parker could receive a hearing in the Senate before the end of 2021.

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