

US Federal Labor Viewpoints – Week of July 5, 2021

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This is a weekly post spotlighting labor topics in focus by the US legislative and executive branches during the previous week. In this issue, we cover:

- President Touts His Build Back Better Agenda
- New Executive Order
- USMCA Updates
- Labor Department Child/Forced Labor Grant Announced | Malaysia
- Upcoming Senate Confirmation Hearing

Both chambers of the U.S. Congress were in recess this week. Senators return to Washington next week; House lawmakers return to session the week of July 19.

President Touts His Build Back Better Agenda. U.S. President Joe Biden travelled to Illinois on Wednesday, July 7, to visit McHenry County College, a community college with a workforce development program and a childcare center – programs that the President’s Build Back Better agenda would invest in and that would align with his American Families Plan. In [remarks](#), the President stressed his plan would provide up to 12 weeks of paid family leave, as well as invest in a childcare workforce with better wages, benefits, and training opportunities. He reinforced his remarks in a [tweet](#) that day:

"We are one of the few major economies in the world that does not cover paid family and medical leave. My Build Back Better Agenda will change that by providing up to 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave."

New Executive Order. On Friday afternoon (July 9), President Biden signed an [Executive Order](#)

(E.O.) on competition. According to a White House [fact sheet](#), the order establishes a whole-of-government effort to promote competition in the American economy. The E.O. includes 72 initiatives by more than a dozen federal agencies to address some of the competition problems across the U.S. economy. With respect to labor, the order will make it easier to change jobs and help raise wages by encouraging the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to ban or limit non-compete agreements and ban unnecessary, cumbersome occupational licensing requirements that “impede economic mobility.”

The E.O. also calls on FTC and U.S. Department of Justice to strengthen antitrust guidance to prevent employers from collaborating to suppress wages or reduce benefits by sharing wage and benefit information with one another. It further touches on antitrust concerns, focusing on specific labor markets such as agriculture, healthcare (which includes prescription drugs, hospital consolidation, and insurance), banking and finance, internet service, and the technology sector, among others. The order establishes a White House Competition Council, led by the Director of the National Economic Council, to monitor federal agencies’ progress on implementing the initiatives in the order and “to coordinate the Federal Government’s response to the rising power of large corporations in the economy.”

USMCA Updates. U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai traveled to Mexico City this week, to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement’s (USMCA) entry into force. A [trilateral joint statement](#) reflected the North American trade ministers “visited the Federal Center of Conciliation and Labor Registry and the Federal Labor Tribunal, where they saw first-hand the role of these institutions in the implementation of Mexico’s labor reform, in place since May 2019, and emphasized their commitment to leading the fight against forced labor globally.”

Ambassador Tai issued a [statement](#) after the United States and Mexico jointly announced [a remediation plan](#) on July 8 to address the denial of the right of free association and collective bargaining to workers at a General Motors facility in Silao, Mexico. She stated:

The action announced today complements Mexico’s important labor law reforms, and I commend the Mexican government for taking swift action when they recognized that workers’ rights were denied.”

Labor Department Child/Forced Labor Grant Announced | Malaysia. On July 6, the U.S. Department of Labor announced the availability of \$5 million in grant funding to combat child and forced labor abuses in Malaysia’s palm oil and garment industries. Administered by the Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB), this funding opportunity will support a project to assist Malaysian workers and civil society in their efforts to advocate for the elimination of forced labor and child labor in these sectors. Interested parties can access further information on the opportunity [here](#).

Upcoming Senate Confirmation Hearing. On July 15, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee is set to hold a [confirmation hearing](#) for: (1) [David Weil](#) to serve as Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division at the Department of Labor; (2) [Gwynne Wilcox](#) to serve as a Member of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB); and (3) [David Prouty](#) to serve as a Member of the NLRB.

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