

Nominee Announced to Become Head of MSHA

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On November 12, 2021, the White House announced the nomination of Christopher Williamson to become the assistant secretary of Mine Safety and Health. If confirmed by the U.S. Senate, Williamson will become the top leader of the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), filling the position that has remained vacant since David Zatezalo resigned at the end of the Trump administration.

Williamson is a West Virginia native and currently serves as senior counsel to National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) Chair Lauren McFerran (D). He previously worked on Capitol Hill as labor counsel to former senator Tom Harkin on the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee and was a legislative assistant to Senator Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.).

Williamson has MSHA experience, having worked in a senior leadership role at the agency during the Obama administration, and he was a clerk for Administrative Law Judge Jacqueline Bulluck at the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission. He has undergraduate and law degrees from West Virginia University and a masters of public policy from American University.

The United Mine Workers of America has issued a statement fully supporting Williamson's nomination. Williamson's experience at the NLRB and on the HELP Committee on the Hill likely will bring a policy-focused perspective to MSHA. Mine operators can expect an emphasis on rulemaking, a focus on Federal Mine Safety and Health Act discrimination complaints, as well as attempts to establish precedent-setting interpretations of MSHA's standards and the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act.

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