



Friends, my name is Scott Jackson and it is a great honor and pleasure to sit before you as Governor Dannel P. Malloy's choice to serve as the next Commissioner of Labor. Many of you may know me from my prior service as Mayor of the great Town of Hamden, and back in Hamden there is a common saying in political circles: "the Mayor lives and dies by his (or her) appointments." The Governor's faith in me to lead this department during this critical time is truly humbling.

I would like to take a moment to share a bit about myself. My résumé is already before you, and it shows 22 years of progressively challenging positions at the federal, state, and local levels of government.

First and foremost, I am the father of my fourth grader, Max and second grader, Eli, who both attend Ridge Hill School in Hamden. They are my magnetic due north and I firmly believe that the very best public policy is that which is crafted with our children in mind. But there is also my mother, who lives one mile from me in the house where I grew up. She sacrificed to raise three children, including one who is disabled and still lives with her, and her ability to pay for policy initiatives must be incorporated into the equation.

Some of my friends in labor know me through my wife, Mandi, who is the Executive Director of a non-profit music education program for students in New Haven schools. She also worked for many years pursuing economic and social justice in New Haven as part of the UNITE-HERE team.

My interest in public policy probably stems from my big brother, Craig. He is severely autistic—non-communicative—and we shared a room for two decades. In my house, no one could make plans without asking the question, “but what about Craig?” Care for the well-being, the safety and security, and the opportunities of another person of value were institutionalized in my house, and to me, these are the same guiding principles of public policy. Craig happily goes to work every day, and I want to thank Richie Borer and the team at Easter Seals Goodwill Industries for making sure my brother, despite the cards dealt to him, has the opportunity to grow as part of our community.

Historically, the Commissioner of Labor comes from within the ranks of organized labor. Not only do I sit before you with no professional history in organized labor, but also as a nominee who has not—not even for one day in 22 years of service—been covered by a collective bargaining agreement.

So I think it is fair to ask the question: how will organized labor respond? My friends in labor would probably tell you that I am tough but fair. Some days, circumstances have required me to be a little “tougher,” but that is part of the job requirement when you are spending the public’s money. And the “fair” never wavers. My friends in labor will tell you that I am an active listener with an open door. My friends in labor will tell you that I learn, and although I much prefer to learn from the mistakes of others, I have also had occasion to learn from my own. Sometimes, those are the lessons you remember the best.

Early in my first term as Mayor, in a terrible year of the Great Recession, I jumped into a plow truck with the Public Works union president in the middle part of a storm that would ultimately dump more than 20 inches of snow. Every once in a while my friends at CCM or COST will dust me off and trot me out to speak to newly-elected officials, and I always advise that they get into a plow during the first snowstorm

because it is like a master's thesis in frontline service delivery. My relationship with Public Works started somewhere between rocky and downright bad. But it got better because they allowed me opportunities to walk in their shoes, and I offered them opportunities to walk in mine, and this created real opportunities for solution-building. I saw that same union president at a dinner last Saturday night and we had a great few minutes together. Not because we developed a grudging respect for each other, but because we developed an actual respect and understanding. We were able to convince each other, and then our respective teams, that we were aiming for the same target: excellence in the delivery of services to the citizen-customers who deserve nothing less.

And just today, I have at my right hand a new friend from labor, Deputy Commissioner Kurt Westby. A veteran of SEIU Local 32BJ, Mr. Westby's *bona fides* in organized labor are both unparalleled and unimpeachable. And here is where I want to return to my Public Works story: when relationships between management and that unit were bad, outcomes were bad. Productivity suffered. I firmly believe that one of the Department of Labor's top priorities must be the aggressive promotion of labor peace. Our public and private workspaces cannot lose competitive advantage due to labor strife. Not now, not ever. Our state and our communities cannot afford to be labeled by headlines about labor disagreements, causing investors to look elsewhere without ever getting to see the beauty of this great state in which we have all chosen to live. The Department of Labor needs to be proactive in this endeavor, and I firmly believe that Kurt Westby and I are uniquely qualified to carry this message together.

In addition to labor peace, the Department needs to refine its focus on customer service. Unemployment Insurance is one of our critical service areas. During the nadir of the Great Recession, Unemployment Insurance pumped \$2 billion into

Connecticut's economy. This kept grocery stores and barber shops and gas stations open. This kept the heat on and roofs over peoples' heads. Unemployment Insurance needs to be timely, and prolonged call wait times for initial claims during peak periods is unacceptable. There is a modernization effort currently underway to address those waits, but transitioning from a 40-year-old mainframe to an appropriate contemporary environment takes years, not weeks.

But we can't wait years. So the team and I are going to throw the kitchen sink at this problem. We expect to have some new online opportunities available this summer. I look forward to working closely with my team to mine every efficiency and take advantage of every creative opportunity while the transition to a 21<sup>st</sup> century platform is underway. The Department of Labor is a public-facing agency, and we need to address these delays if we are to face that public with our heads held high.

At the end of the day, my job at the Department of Labor is to help create an economic and social environment where my sons, Max and Eli, can grow and prosper. Where they can take advantage of every opportunity and, when the time comes, they can choose to stay right here in Connecticut as I have done, as my siblings have done, and as my mother has done.

My job at the Department of Labor is also to welcome back, as part of the Second Chance Initiative, my cousin, a man of great heart and great intellect, but with criminal strikes on his record.

My job is to make sure Tom from Milford, with whom I've conversed this past week, gets the answers he needs about unemployment insurance so he can take care of his family while he searches for a job.

My job is to work with the technical high schools, with the State Department of Education, Board of Regents and private colleges, industry, and the Workforce

Development Boards to make sure we are looking forward, not backward, in the alignment of our programming and apprenticeships. My job is to improve morale and let employees know that they are valuable after a very difficult round of 95 layoffs last year. My job is to set lofty goals and, with an experienced and energized team, exceed them. My job is to work with legislators on priority items in your districts. My job is to work with my fellow Commissioners to ensure that our investment in people—including young people, combat veterans like my father (of blessed memory) and people like my big brother Craig and my cousin—synergizes with their public investments.

The Department of Labor is both multi-faceted and collaborative. It is one of the engines of the rising economic tide. I am excited about this opportunity. Kurt Westby is excited about this opportunity. Our new sets of eyes and different ways of doing business, combined with what adds up to centuries of experience already present within the Department of Labor's leadership team, creates what I hope to be a defining moment for this agency.

I thank you for your time, your kind attention, and your sincere consideration of this nomination. I am happy to entertain any questions you may have.