

Questions for Labor Commissioner Nominee

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February 24, 2023 | 2023-R-0049

Department of Labor

In addition to overseeing the Department of Labor (DOL), the labor commissioner administers numerous labor laws, including those on wages and working conditions, family and medical leave, unemployment insurance compensation, paid sick leave, and the prevailing wage. Among other things, she must also collect data on (1) employment, unemployment, and employee earnings and (2) current and anticipated employment needs ([CGS § 31-2](#) as amended by [PA 21-2, June Special Session](#), § 212).

The labor commissioner is appointed by the governor and confirmed by either chamber of the General Assembly, as determined by the governor ([CGS §§ 31-1](#) and [4-5](#) to [4-7](#)).

Questions

1. What role does DOL play in the state's economy? What does the department do to help encourage economic growth? What steps will you take as commissioner to do so?
2. The state's unemployment trust fund became insolvent during the COVID-19 pandemic and through the end of this past November the state had borrowed roughly \$1 billion from the federal government in order to continue paying unemployment benefits. What has the state and DOL done to help ease the burden that employers may face in having to repay this debt.
3. When the pandemic caused a massive spike in unemployment, DOL's outdated claims processing system was overwhelmed by the volume of new claimants. Can you update us on the status of the department's new claims processing system, [ReEmployCT](#), which was

launched this past summer? How do you plan to keep the department technologically up to date going forward? Did the pandemic experience highlight any statutory, regulatory, or administrative changes needed to improve the system?

4. Recent [media reports](#) indicate that nationally, more than \$60 billion in unemployment benefits may have been paid out on fraudulent claims. Can you speak to the extent of unemployment fraud in Connecticut and what DOL is doing about it?
5. How has the department been affected by last year's surge in state employee retirements? Is DOL fully staffed? Are you having trouble finding qualified candidates for open positions?
6. How effective is the department at enforcing the state's wage and hour laws (e.g., catching employers who fail to meet minimum wage and overtime pay requirements)? How has the size of the department's wage and hour enforcement staff changed over the past 10 to 20 years? What would you do with a larger enforcement staff that you cannot do now?
7. Officials in many Connecticut towns believe that the state's prevailing wage law significantly increases their construction costs and limits their ability to fund additional projects. What effect do you believe the state's prevailing wage law has on municipal projects? How would increasing the cost thresholds, which make the prevailing wage requirements applicable, impact both municipalities and the workers on municipal construction projects?
8. How well-informed is the general public, both employers and employees, about what the department does, and can do, for them? What steps has DOL taken to increase public awareness about it and what else do you plan to do in the future?
9. Before you became deputy labor commissioner in 2018, you served in the General Assembly. Has your experience as a state legislator impacted your ability to serve as labor commissioner? As commissioner, how do you balance the interests of employees and the interests of employers? Looking ahead, what do you hope to be able to say was your greatest achievement as commissioner?

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