



Christine L. Owens
Executive Director

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March 29, 2017

Chairman Lamar Alexander
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate

Ranking Member Patty Murray
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate

Dear Senator Alexander and Senator Murray:

Our nation's workers and their families deserve nothing less than a Labor Secretary who genuinely cares about their welfare and is single-mindedly focused on upholding our essential values of equality, opportunity, and prosperity. The forced withdrawal of President Trump's first Labor Secretary nominee is a clear indication that our country will not settle for a nominee who does not support policies that foster and promote the well-being of our workforce.

When NELP learned of Alexander Acosta's nomination to be Secretary of Labor, we were cautiously optimistic that someone with his life experience and record of public service might prove himself to be an acceptable candidate, even if not the one we would have chosen. We measure his suitability against some very basic yardsticks such as views on increasing the minimum wage, extending affordable health care, expanding eligibility for overtime pay, ensuring safe and healthy workplaces, fighting wage theft, strengthening and protecting workers' ability to save for retirement, and fighting the many forms of discrimination that continue to plague our nation's workplaces.

Unfortunately, after Mr. Acosta's hearing, we don't have answers on far too many of these issues. Though Mr. Acosta spoke of his prosecutorial background and commitment to enforcement of the laws DOL oversees, we heard few details about how he would go about enforcement. He spoke about how unjust it is that the overtime regulation is so out of date, yet also questioned the Department's authority to issue such a regulation, ignoring the entire history of the overtime regulation since the passage of the FLSA. And he failed to commit to defending the silica dust regulation that would prevent 600 deaths per year, or the conflict of interest regulation that would require investment advisors to simply make recommendations in the best interests of their clients, not their own bottom lines.

These are but a few of the many questions Mr. Acosta left unanswered, all the while still maintaining that he will be a champion for workers. And workers need that champion more than ever before. Unfortunately, given Mr. Acosta's answers, or lack thereof, at his hearing, NELP cannot support his nomination to be Labor Secretary and we urge that Senators decline to support it as well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christine L. Owens". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

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Executive Director