

Andy Puzder for Labor Secretary

By: *Alfredo Ortiz*

As President-elect Donald Trump solidifies his cabinet, the nation's job creators (and those looking for a job) eagerly await his decision on one executive branch: the Department of Labor. Trump should end the years of overzealous regulation from the bureaucrats at the current Labor Department and appoint someone who not only understands job creation, but is a proven job creator himself. On that note, Andy Puzder, CEO of CKE Restaurants, who is under consideration for the post of Labor Secretary, would be an ideal pick.

Ask 10 people on the street what the Labor Department does and you'd be lucky to get one who could give you the correct answer. Yet the department's inconspicuousness is only trumped by its importance. It sets the employee regulation agenda for the entire country, including the 28 million small businesses that employ over 56 million hard working Americans.

Unfortunately, the current Labor Department seemingly doesn't understand that over-regulation reduces job opportunities through the burden it places on all businesses, especially small businesses which create two-thirds of all new jobs. Its recent tenure has been defined by trying to double the overtime rule, enacting the blacklisting rule, and advocating for job killing minimum wage increases (to name a few) that make it more difficult for businesses, and in particular, small businesses, to do what they do best: create jobs and opportunities for people to pull themselves out of poverty.

Mr. Puzder would provide welcome relief for the small business community that has had to endure years of regulatory assault. He is someone who deeply understands the Labor Department regulatory

burden facing job creators because it is one that he lives with every day running two of the nation's most popular restaurant franchises, Carl's Jr and Hardee's.

What Puzder understands is that economic freedom, characterized by limited regulation on small business owners, like his franchisees, allows people to achieve their financial goals and their American Dream. These CKE franchisees that employ over 75,000 people in 3,000 restaurants in the United States are small business owners that are in desperate need of regulatory relief. But, it is not his franchisees alone that are looking for relief, but all those across the country that collectively employ nearly 18 million direct and indirect jobs.

These are the jobs that Mr. Puzder deeply understands are impacted by such issues as increases to the minimum wage.

That's not to say that Puzder isn't criticized. Far-left activists and social justice warriors have criticized Puzder for not supporting current calls to more than double the federal entry-level wage to \$15 an hour. In fact, what Puzder understands all too well is that doubling the wage floor will kill those entry level jobs – hurting, not helping, those in need.

What Puzder looks for are solutions that can address the issues without breaking the backs of our small business owners. As an example, he is in favor of expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit (which we renamed the "Working Americans Credit"), which supplements the income of entry-level employees, rewarding work and allowing them to pursue not just jobs but careers. This credit would more directly help the 551,000 Americans over the age of 25 earning the entry-level wage than by

threatening their jobs with an entry-level wage hike.

Rather than the counterproductive Fight for \$15, the policies that Puzder supports enable the betterment of people in entry level jobs with the skills and training to be able to create careers. Why would we want to spend so much time fighting for raising wage floors, when we should be fighting to raise wage ceilings? This aspirational goal to raise the wage ceiling, not just the floor, is not farfetched

Currently there are 5.5 million job openings in the country – one of the highest levels in history. Many of these jobs – including plumbers, tradespersons, and medical technicians – pay around \$50,000 a year or more.

But in order for Americans to get these good jobs, they must be able to get a first job, where they can learn skills and get the on-the-job training that allows them to quickly get promoted and get a pay raise. Raising the entry-level wage would reduce these extremely valuable first jobs. Mr. Puzder will Fight for \$50, as in \$50,000 per year jobs.

By pursuing such a "first do no harm" regulatory policy as well as allowing small business owners to create jobs and economic prosperity, Puzder's Department of Labor would provide opportunity to millions of unemployed, underemployed, and out-of-the-labor-force Americans. This election put a proven job creator in the White House. Now it's time for the President-elect to double-down on his jobs mandate by putting a proven job creator at the helm of the Labor Department.

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