

Exclusive – Allen West: Andy Puzder Will Increase Opportunities for Black Americans

By: Allen West

It is Black History Month, again. This month is set aside to celebrate the many contributions made by blacks to American culture. But beyond the routine photo-ops and politically correct statements, this is a time to address the often overlooked challenges facing black communities across the country.

At the top of the list of challenges facing black Americans is the dramatic lack of economic opportunity available to black residents in major American cities.

Black unemployment rates are still sky high. In cities including Atlanta, Chicago and Washington, D.C., the unemployment rate among African Americans is 19, 23, and 18 percent, respectively, according to the most-recently available U.S. Census Bureau data.

These dramatic unemployment rates, which are many multiples of the national average, obscure even worse carnage in specific neighborhoods. In Atlanta's Castleberry Hill neighborhood, the black unemployment rate is 30 percent; in Chicago's Canaryville, it's 40 percent; and in Washington D.C.'s Congress Heights, it's 28 percent. Nationally, the current black youth unemployment rate is more than double that of whites.

With unemployment comes crime. According to the Major Cities Chiefs Association, violent crime is up significantly in major cities nationwide. A Wall Street Journal survey finds that 16 of the 20 largest police departments reported a homicide increase in 2016. And of the four cities that decreased, three had homicide increases over 50 percent in 2015. Increased crime chases away existing business activity, further reducing job opportunities.

To end this vicious cycle, legislators must relentlessly pursue policies that foster business and job creation. We should not forget that it was now deceased former U.S. Congressman

and Vice Presidential nominee, Jack Kemp, who along with President Reagan's economic advisor, Art Laffer, introduced the concept of urban economic empowerment zones.

These aforementioned and disturbing statistics have come under the leadership of liberal progressive policies. And most recently, the lack of economic growth in the black community has been exacerbated under the leadership and policies of the first black President and his Secretary of Labor, Thomas Perez.

Therefore, U.S. Senators can take a major step to rectify this situation by confirming Donald Trump's Secretary of Labor Nominee, Andy Puzder.

Puzder is the CEO of CKE Restaurants, which owns Carl's Jr. and Hardee's. When he became CEO, the company was on the verge of bankruptcy. He has turned it into a billion dollar brand, with 3,000 domestic locations employing 75,000 Americans. In other words, Puzder comes from the job creation trenches, which is surprisingly rare for a U.S. Secretary of Labor, and he is necessary for economic growth and opportunity.

A Puzder-led labor department would leverage his experience to immediately help increase opportunities for black Americans by eliminating past labor department over-regulation. This would reduce the cost and increase the amount of business creation and hiring. According to a nationwide poll of small businesses conducted last year by the Job Creators Network, three in five respondents said the current regulatory environment was threatening their ability to expand and hire.

Past labor department regulations include the persuader rule, the overtime rule, the blacklisting rule, and the shotgun election rule, as well as robust support for dramatic minimum wage increases. While each of these

regulations differ in scope, they are all similar in their capacity to increase the cost of employment – therefore resulting in less of it.

One regulation pushed by the previous labor department that deserves a little more attention is the “joint employer” mandate. Among other negative repercussions, this mandate could have upended the wildly successful franchise business model because it could have made franchisors responsible for the thousands of daily decisions made by their franchisees.

To avoid liability, franchisors are forced to reduce franchising opportunities to risky candidates, who are often minorities tending to locate in minority-heavy neighborhoods, employing minority jobseekers. In fact, 20 percent of the roughly 800,000 U.S. franchises are minority-owned, and they succeed nearly 50 percent more often than minority-owned non-franchise businesses.

Andy Puzder has seen first-hand the power of the franchise model – 94 percent of CKE Restaurants are franchised – and will enact policies to defend it.

Confirming a labor secretary who understands labor markets is a major step toward addressing the lack of opportunity – not just for blacks, but for all Americans. Sadly, addressing this lack of economic growth and opportunity is not part of Black History Month boilerplate, but it is a necessary part of reigniting the historic entrepreneurial spirit in black communities across the country.

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