

**Chairman Roy Blunt Opening Statement
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies**

**Hearing to review to Review the FY2017 Budget Request & Budget Justification
for the U.S. Department of Labor**

March 17, 2016

(As prepared for delivery)

Good morning. Thank you, Secretary Perez, for appearing before the Subcommittee today to discuss the Department of Labor's fiscal year 2017 budget request. We look forward to hearing your testimony.

Fostering an environment and regulatory agenda where everyone can flourish, where workers are protected, and where Americans can establish and grow businesses keeps the country's economic engine driving forward. We have many shared priorities in the budget that reflect bipartisan and widespread support. Workforce training, ensuring safe workplaces, and helping Americans who lose their jobs return to the workforce make up the bedrock of the Department's responsibilities.

At the same time, the devil is in details and I am disappointed that the \$627 million increase for the Department of Labor dwarfs the total increase for all non-defense discretionary spending – which is \$40 million. Further, this increase was only possible with untenable budget gimmicks within the Department of Health and Human Services' budget request. Finally, the Administration is attempting to evade the agreed-upon spending caps by designating large portions of the budget request as “mandatory,” or off-budget, spending.

It is my hope we can work together to identify priorities and find common ground while adhering to budget caps agreed to a little more than four months ago.

As the country continues to recover from the recession, it is time for the Administration to admit that government regulations and overreach do not create job growth. I continue to have serious concerns about the Department's aggressive regulatory agenda and methods used to short-circuit the fair and open regulatory process.

I hear from Missourians and Americans across the country about the adverse effects the Department's regulations has on them and job creation in their community. Yet the Department continues to move forward with increasing burdens that deter job creators from hiring.

Even more concerning, the Department pushes many of these controversial policy changes outside the regulatory process altogether and without public comment or input. They are being implemented through administrative memos, sweeping new “interpretation” publications, and changes in definitions that alter the scope of the law. Many small businesses feel almost overrun by aggressive regulation and by policy changes that do not result from the legal, full, and open regulatory process.

Finally, I have concerns about bureaucratic growth. The Department has again requested large increases in departmental personnel, 779 new employees in FY2017 alone. This request is both unaffordable and primarily used to drive a partisan regulatory agenda.

Mr. Secretary, I look forward to hearing your testimony today and appreciate your dialogue with us about these important issues. While there are clearly matters on which we disagree, I know we share a strong desire to protect and support the American workforce and a stronger economy.

Thank you.

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