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# Leadership Updates and a New Opinion Letter Program Confirm the U.S. Department of Labor's Increased Focus on Compliance Assistance

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The U.S. Department of Labor ("DOL") recently named several political appointments to its Wage and Hour Division ("WHD"). Employers know WHD is an entity with vast enforcement authority, including over minimum wage and overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act ("FLSA"), so should consider in their pay practice planning the impacts these leaders will have on WHD priorities.

We previously suggested (e.g., [here](#) and [here](#)) that the WHD pendulum would likely swing back towards compliance assistance during Trump 2.0, and these leadership appointments indicate such predictions are coming to fruition:

- While the announcement was recent, Don Harrison has been serving as WHD's acting administrator since April 1, 2025. Acting Administrator Harrison held roles within the Alabama Department of Workforce, such as general counsel and deputy secretary. Before his stints in government, Acting Administrator Harrison's worked in the private sector at a [firm](#) providing services in subject areas including agency & litigation defense, union avoidance, the FLSA, and immigration.
- WHD senior policy advisor Caroline Brown, a self-described "[FLSA Geek](#)," joins WHD with wage-hour practice experience at a management-side firm.
- Glenn Viers, another new WHD senior policy advisor, worked for 30+ years as vice president and general counsel at Hillstone Restaurant Group Inc. after experience with an employer-side firm in labor and employment law. With hospitality issues like the tip credit and limiting taxes on overtime at the forefront, Mr. Viers' background could prove important as President Trump's WHD refines its positions on such hot topics.
- And Garrett Buttrey makes three . . . senior policy advisors. Buttrey comes to WHD following his role as chief counsel for the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions ("HELP") Committee. Prior to his work with the HELP Committee, Mr. Buttrey represented employers at various private law firms.
- Finally, Dana Deason lands at WHD in a policy advisor position. One of these appointments is not like the others, as Ms. Deason does not have a law degree. However, she has worked in human resources for several

transportation and logistics companies with job titles reflecting experience in government compliance, inclusion, safety, and affirmative action.

In the world of wage-hour compliance, employers need clarity and time to ensure the development and implementation of lawful policies and procedures. These recent WHD appointees' backgrounds indicate an understanding of industry perspectives – and should also arm them with knowledge concerning wage-hour laws' impacts on workers. In their roles, WHD leaders will have an additional resource to facilitate stakeholder education: DOL's Opinion Letter Program, [launched](#) early last week.

The Office of the Secretary's June 2, 2025, press release explains that the Opinion Letter Program "expands the department's longstanding commitment to providing meaningful compliance assistance that helps workers, employers and other stakeholders understand how federal labor laws apply in specific workplace situations." WHD is one of five Department enforcement agencies that will issue opinion letters to "provide official written interpretations from the department's enforcement agencies, explaining how laws apply to specific factual circumstances presented by individuals or organizations," with goals to "address[] real-world questions" to "promote clarity, consistency, and transparency in the application of federal labor standards."

Even with increased compliance assistance, WHD's enforcement activities will continue. Indeed, in June 5, 2025, [testimony](#) before the House Committee on Education & Workforce, Secretary of Labor Lori Chavez DeRemer pledged to keep enforcing wage-hour laws despite DOL's budget seeking a \$25 million reduction in WHD funding, stating DOL will have funds sufficient to fully enforce the laws it administers. It remains important for employers to consult with competent counsel about wage-hour practices to ensure compliance at the federal, state, and local levels. Conn Maciel Carey's experienced, national [Labor and Employment Practice Group](#) tracks relevant developments and stands ready to provide expert advice in these areas. We are always available to answer specific questions and discuss any concerns.