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Newly-Confirmed Secretary of Labor Lori Chavez-DeRemer and Deputy Secretary Keith Sonderling Set to Lead U.S. Workplace Policy

By Kara M. Maciel

On March 10, 2025, the U.S. Senate confirmed Lori Chavez-DeRemer as Secretary of Labor with Keith Sonderling joining her as Deputy Secretary of Labor in the new Trump Administration. The vote was 67 to 32, with 17 Democrats voting in her favor and 3 Republicans voting against. As we previously reported on our blog, their appointments mark a shift in labor policy under President Trump's second term, with a focus on business-friendly regulations and workforce development.

Lori Chavez-DeRemer: Second Latina Secretary of Labor

Lori Chavez-DeRemer, a former U.S. Representative from Oregon, will now lead the Department of Labor. She has emphasized a commitment to job growth, reducing regulatory burdens on businesses, and strengthening apprenticeship programs. Her confirmation aligns with the administration's focus on creating a more flexible labor market and rolling back policies from the Biden Administration. The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee held her confirmation hearing on February 19, 2025, during which Ms. Chavez-DeRemer emphasized her commitment to working-class Americans. She cited her background as the daughter of a Teamsters union member and her experience as a small business owner. She also stressed the importance of expanding alternative career pathways, such as apprenticeships, to bolster the U.S. workforce. She also expressed support for the H-1B visa program, which allows foreign workers to fill specialized roles in the U.S., while also acknowledging concerns from lawmakers regarding its impact on American workers. The HELP Committee advanced her nomination by a vote of 13-9 to the full Senate.

Keith Sonderling: Deputy Secretary with a Business-Focused Agenda

Keith Sonderling, a former Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) vice-chair, will serve as Deputy Secretary of Labor. With experience in labor law and business regulation, Sonderling is expected to focus on policies supporting gig workers, AI in the workplace, and voluntary compliance for businesses. He previously served in the Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division under Trump's first term. His nomination received bipartisan support, particularly from the business community, and was praised by lawmakers such as Senator Bill Cassidy and Representative Tim Walberg.

As they take office, both Secretary Chavez-DeRemer and Deputy Secretary Sonderling will play key roles in shaping labor policies that prioritize employer flexibility and economic growth while navigating debates over worker protections. Their leadership is expected to lead to a more deregulatory approach compared to the previous administration.

Image courtesy of Lori Chavez-DeRemer for Congress