



April 28, 2021

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The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chair, Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr  
Ranking Member, Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

**Re: Nomination of Seema Nanda as U.S. Solicitor of Labor**

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, together with 53 organizations committed to ensuring the protection and advancement of the rights, economic security, and well-being of all working people in this country, writes in support of the nomination of Seema Nanda to serve as U.S. Solicitor of Labor.

Seema Nanda is highly qualified for the position to which she has been nominated. Nanda has dedicated the bulk of her career in public service to advancing opportunities for working people and ensuring the promotion and protection of federal anti-discrimination laws. As former chief of staff to Labor Secretary Tom Perez, former deputy solicitor, and former deputy chief of staff at the Labor Department, Nanda has deep familiarity with the department, and possesses significant expertise in civil rights, labor, and employment law. She is also a champion for workers' rights and is experienced in leading complex, diverse organizations. The Leadership Conference was fortunate to have Nanda serve as executive vice president and chief operating officer, as she helped to usher in a new chapter for our coalition.

Now, at this critical moment in history, Nanda is the right person to serve as solicitor of labor. More than one year after the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in the United States, working people across the nation continue to feel the economic impact of this ongoing global health crisis. Though thousands of jobs were added to the economy in March, the labor market is still down 8.4 million jobs from its pre-pandemic level. Structural racism and longstanding inequities have made the crisis worse for people of color, women, immigrants, and people with disabilities. Black, Latino, and Asian workers, for example, continue to experience more job loss than White workers, and Black women and Latinas have experienced historically high unemployment rates.<sup>1</sup> People with disabilities, as a group, have

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<sup>1</sup> Elise Gould, Economic Policy Institute, March Jobs Report (Apr. 2, 2021), <https://www.epi.org/indicators/unemployment/>.

also suffered disproportionate job loss; between March and August of last year, one in five workers with disabilities lost their jobs.<sup>2</sup> Lack of paid leave, childcare, and other support during the pandemic have pushed many women out of the labor market entirely, threatening the immediate and long-term economic security of children and families. Two-thirds of mothers were either primary or co-breadwinners for their families before the pandemic, with more than 40 percent serving as sole or primary breadwinners. Low-income women and women of color are especially likely to be key breadwinners for their families.<sup>3</sup>

People across this country deserve a Department of Labor that will promote an equitable shared recovery and use all the tools available to ensure that the communities hit hardest by the pandemic have meaningful access to opportunities, that all workplaces are safe, and that all working people can earn a living free from harassment and unlawful discrimination. The solicitor of labor, together with the secretary and deputy secretary, must ensure that the department meets the moment, and Nanda is an exceptional choice. Throughout her career, Nanda has demonstrated a deep and nuanced understanding of both the Department of Labor and of the challenges facing our workforce, particularly those workers who because of their race, gender, disability, or other characteristics have long struggled to find secure, quality, and family-sustaining jobs, and are finding it even more difficult to do so in these current times.

Importantly, the solicitor of labor is more than just the department's lawyer; the solicitor of labor is the top lawyer for millions of working people in the United States. Many of the statutes under the department's jurisdiction place exclusive enforcement authority in the hands of the department and do not provide a means for individual workers to pursue enforcement of their rights. Working people are therefore dependent on the department, and on the solicitor of labor, to vindicate crucial protections such as those provided under Executive Order 11246 and the Occupational Safety and Health Act, and other important laws. The solicitor also plays a key role in the development of regulations and standards that help ensure compliance with labor and employment laws, as well as legislative proposals to strengthen workplace protections. Workers need someone who understands the challenges they face so that laws, regulations, standards, and all other policy proposals are crafted with a keen eye toward addressing their needs.

Seema Nanda is well-suited to perform this role:

- Nanda has significant experience collaborating across agencies. While at the Department of Labor, for example, Nanda led a successful effort to update and expand a memorandum of understanding among the Department of Labor, the Department of Homeland Security, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and the National Labor Relations Board to ensure robust enforcement of labor and employment laws, including protections against workplace discrimination, retaliation, and intimidation, consistent with federal immigration laws.

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<sup>2</sup> Allen Smith, A Million People with Disabilities Have Lost Jobs During the Pandemic (Aug. 29, 2020), <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/legal-and-compliance/employment-law/pages/coronavirus-unemployment-people-with-disabilities.aspx>;

<sup>3</sup> Sarah Jane Glynn, Center for American Progress, Breadwinning Mothers Are Critical to Families' Economic Security (Mar. 29, 2021), <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/news/2021/03/29/497658/breadwinning-mothers-critical-familys-economic-security/>.

- Nanda has a proven record of promoting employment opportunities. While at the Department of Labor, Nanda oversaw the expansion of the Registered Apprenticeship program. Through stakeholder engagement, the creation of new grant programs, and a public campaign, Nanda's efforts resulted in a 20 percent increase in the number of apprentices within two years.
- Outside of the Department of Labor, Nanda led the Office of Immigrant and Employee Rights Section of the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division, which is responsible for enforcing the anti-discrimination provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act. In addition to providing leadership to section attorneys, Nanda also led the development of immigration reform proposals and developed public education and training programs.
- As a fellow with the Harvard Law School, Labor and Worklife Program, and as an independent consultant, Nanda has continued to research labor law issues and has provided expertise on workers' rights and workplace policy proposals aimed at ensuring an equitable economic recovery.

The solicitor of labor plays a key role in ensuring that the Department of Labor can fulfill its mission to promote the welfare of working people, improve working conditions, advance opportunities, and protect and enforce workplace rights. Seema Nanda has demonstrated a deep commitment to this mission, and her background and experience make her exceptionally qualified to serve as solicitor of labor. For these reasons, we urge you to support the confirmation of Seema Nanda to be U.S. Solicitor of Labor.

If you have any questions, please contact Gaylynn Burroughs, senior policy counsel at The Leadership Conference, at [burroughs@civilrights.org](mailto:burroughs@civilrights.org).

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

A. Philip Randolph Institute

AFL-CIO

African American Ministers In Action

American Association for Justice

Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)

Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC

Association of Flight Attendants-CWA

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

California Employment Lawyers Association

Center for American Progress

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Center for Parental Leave Leadership

Centro de los Derechos del Migrante, Inc.

Chicago Foundation for Women

Clearinghouse on Women's Issues  
Coalition of Labor Union Women  
Coalition on Human Needs  
Communications Workers of America (CWA)  
Economic Policy Institute  
Equal Rights Advocates  
Farmworker Justice  
Feminist Majority Foundation  
Futures Without Violence  
Indiana Institute for Working Families  
LatinoJustice PRLDEF  
Matthew Shepard Foundation  
National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA)  
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum  
National Black Justice Coalition  
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)  
National Domestic Workers Alliance  
National Education Association  
National Employment Law Project  
National Immigration Law Center  
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund  
National Organization for Women  
National Women's Law Center  
National Workrights Institute  
New Jersey Citizen Action  
People For the American Way  
People's Parity Project  
PFLAG National  
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)  
Public Justice Center  
Secular Coalition for America  
Service Employees International Union  
She the People  
Southwest Women's Law Center  
Supermajority  
The New York Women's Foundation  
UltraViolet  
United State of Women  
Women And Girls Foundation of Southwest Pennsylvania