

# Our new president prioritizes worker safety during pandemic



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**O**n Jan. 21, President Biden released his team's National Strategy for the COVID-19 Response and Pandemic Preparedness. You can download the document at: [whitehouse.gov/priorities/covid-19](https://www.whitehouse.gov/priorities/covid-19).

The introduction to the National Strategy shares that "...the United States is initiating a coordinated pandemic response that not only improves the effectiveness of our fight against COVID-19, but also helps restore trust, accountability and a sense of common purpose in our response to the pandemic" and identifies the administration's goals as follows:

1. Restore trust with the American people.
2. Mount a safe, effective and comprehensive vaccination campaign.
3. Mitigate spread through expanding masking, testing, data, treatments, health care workforce and clear public health standards.
4. Immediately expand emergency relief and exercise the Defense Production Act.
5. Safely reopen schools, businesses and travel while protecting workers.
6. Protect those most at risk and advance equity, including across racial, ethnic and rural/urban lines.
7. Restore U.S. leadership globally and build better preparedness for future threats.

The first step in building trust was to turn the microphones over to the experts, who were kept in hiding during the last administration.

The second step was to uncover the chaos inherited from the last administration, create a solid vaccine distribution program and then implement a plan that will vaccinate in all of our united states, not just the red ones.

## Mask up

President Biden also has challenged everyone in the country to mask up to slow the spread. This is an answer to President John F. Kennedy's 1961 inaugural address, in which he said, "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country."

Wearing a mask is neither a political statement nor a sign of weakness. Wearing a mask is a contribution to the common good.

You either contribute to a safer environment on the workroom floor or you make it more hazardous. Do your part and cut out the games.

## A new national strategy

**The National Strategy also states:**

...It's past time to fix America's COVID 19 response supply shortage problems for good. The United States will immediately address urgent supply gaps, which will require monitoring and strengthening supply chains, while also steering the distribution of supplies to areas with the greatest need...

Over the last four years, I have written about the prior administration turning its back on the American worker and protecting businesses instead. I have written about the lack of any enforcement of the rules that protect our workforce.

President Biden's National Strategy turns attention to you with the following commitment:

...It is critical that the federal government protect the health and safety of America's workers and take swift action to prevent workers from contracting COVID 19 in the workplace. The President will issue Executive Order Protecting Worker Health and Safety which directs the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to issue updated guidance on COVID 19 worker protections. It also directs OSHA and the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) to consider whether emergency temporary standards, including with respect to mask wearing, are necessary. President Biden is taking steps to cover workers not typically covered by OSHA or MSHA by directing agencies like the Department of Transportation to keep workers safe. He has also called on Congress to extend and expand emergency paid leave; to allow OSHA to issue standards covering a broad set of workers, like many public workers on the frontlines; to provide additional funding for worker health and safety enforcement, and to provide grant funding for organizations to help keep vulnerable workers healthy and safe from COVID 19....

The intent is not to return to business as usual, but to safely return to school, open businesses and protect workers. Emphasis on safety.

In February, the Biden team at the Occupational Safety and Health Administration reached out to unions through the AFL-CIO, seeking to get stakeholder input from the representatives of American workers on what we need to safely do the work that must be done while we strive to eradicate COVID-19.

**It's a good thing to have a pro-worker president in the White House.** It's even better when the president is pro-union.

Congratulations and welcome to President Biden and Vice President Harris.

Keep an eye on each other.