

Dept. of Labor recognizes letter carriers and pandemic's other essential workers

On Sept. 1, the Department of Labor (DOL) inducted the “Essential Workers of the Coronavirus Pandemic,” recognizing medical personnel, teachers and letter carriers, among others, into the department’s Hall of Honor.

“The Hall of Honor is about people who changed history,” Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh said at the induction. “And that’s what the essential workers did. They kept our nation strong and made our recovery possible. And more than that: They gave us a new understanding of how our lives depend on labor.”

The hall was established in 1988 as a hall of fame to honor “those Americans whose distinctive contributions in the field of labor have elevated working conditions, wages and overall quality of life of America’s working families.” It has predominantly recognized labor leaders, such as John L. Lewis and Walter Reuther, Mother Jones and Cesar Chavez, but also has included political leaders, titans of industry and others. In addition to the essential workers, the hall has recognized other groups of workers in the past, such as the participants in the Memphis Sanitation Strike of 1968 and the 9/11 rescue workers.

The DOL revamped the hall into the Hall of Honor in 2013 to showcase “the life-changing contributions that a unique group of people have made on the American way of work.”

This year’s event marks the first time that letter carriers have been recognized in the Hall of Honor.

The DOL explained the award as follows:

Amid the coronavirus pandemic, our nation’s essential workers redefined what it truly means to show up for your



The DOL’s poster to commemorate the event featured essential workers.

neighbor. When everyone else was encouraged to stay at home to be safe, essential workers did not have that option. These workers gave the nation a new understanding of and appreciation for the vital jobs they do and the services they provide us every single day.

The essential workers who make our economy function, from care workers to farmworkers, nurses to grocery store clerks, childcare workers to teachers, port truck drivers and warehouse workers and so many more who make life possible for the rest of us are disproportionately low paid workers. They are disproportionately women. They are disproportionately workers of color.

The group was selected by a special DOL panel comprising the solicitor of labor, the assistant secretary for policy and the assistant secretary for administration and management, and chaired by the assistant secretary for public affairs. The honorees were inducted to the hall during a formal cer-

emony conducted at the department’s headquarters in Washington, DC.

When it was determined that the hall would induct the essential workers, the DOL asked the public to write about an essential worker who helped them during the pandemic and who deserved recognition. The 110 nominees—including two postal workers—and the messages of thanks from some of the nominators were part of the commemoration and are viewable at dol.gov/general/essential-workers.

The Hall of Honor is located inside the North Plaza of the department’s Frances Perkins Building at 200 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC. (Perkins, herself an inductee, served as secretary of labor under President Franklin Roosevelt; she was the first woman in that position and is the longest-serving labor secretary in U.S. history.) The portraits and brief biographies of all the inductees are included in the online section of the Hall of Honor at dol.gov/general/aboutdol/hallofhonor. **PR**