

President Biden Signs Directives to Promote Racial Equity, Champion Pandemic Measures

By Kathy Gurchiek

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Following his inauguration Wednesday, President Joe Biden signed 17 executive actions that include orders, memorandum and agency directives. Advancing racial equity, support for underserved communities and protecting workers from COVID-19 were among the measures. Those that affect the workplace include (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/>):

- Defining equity as "the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities, such as Black, Latino, Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and other persons of color; people identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ); people with disabilities; religious minorities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise affected by persistent poverty or inequality."
- Requiring all federal agencies to review equity within their ranks and deliver an action plan within 200 days to address unequal barriers to opportunity found within agency policies and programs.
- Revoking former President Donald Trump's executive order that limited the ability of federal government agencies, contractors and some grantees from implementing some diversity and inclusion training.
- Ensuring that the federal government interprets Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as prohibiting workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. This order will also direct agencies to take all lawful steps to make sure that federal anti-discrimination statutes that cover sex discrimination prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, protecting the rights of LGBTQ individuals.
- Studying new methods that federal agencies can use to assess whether proposed policies advance equity.
- Asking Congress to enact legislation that gives permanent status and a path to citizenship to people who came to the U.S. as children and have lived and worked here for many years. (See related coverage (www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/Pages/Biden-Immigration-Plan-Legalizes-Millions-Undocumented-Workers.aspx.)
- Launching a "100 Days Masking Challenge" with an executive order that requires masks and physical distancing in all federal buildings, on all federal lands, and by federal employees and contractors as an example to other employers around the nation. Biden will ask the Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to work with state, local, tribal and territorial officials to implement masking, physical distancing and other CDC public measures to stop the spread of COVID-19.

SHRM Online collected the following news articles about the incoming president's agenda.

Five Ways Biden Could Change the Federal Workforce

As president of the United States, Biden takes on a job that places him at the helm of the largest employer in the world: the U.S. government. He has already established that he has very different priorities than President Donald Trump did regarding the federal

workforce, and feds can expect to see several initiatives out of the new administration.

(*Federal Times* (<https://www.federaltimes.com/management/2021/01/13/5-personnel-efforts-to-look-out-for-under-a-biden-presidency/>))

Biden's Plans to Fight Inequity Prove Light on Specifics

Biden made it a point to highlight his fight against inequities when he released a flurry of executive orders that reverse course on Trump administration policies. That said, details were scarce, with more likely to come over the next few weeks.

(*Bloomberg* (<https://news.bloomberglaw.com/social-justice/bidens-plans-to-fight-inequity-prove-light-on-specifics>))

Biden Seeks Quick Start with Executive Actions and Aggressive Legislation

Biden plans to roll out dozens of executive orders in his first 10 days on top of a big stimulus plan and an expansive immigration bill. The blueprint of executive action comes after he announced that he will push Congress to pass a \$1.9 trillion package of economic stimulus and pandemic relief, signaling a willingness to be aggressive on policy issues and confronting Republicans from the start to take their lead from him.

(*The New York Times* (<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/16/us/politics/biden-administration-executive-action-legislation.html>))

It's Day One for Joe Biden. Here's What He's Doing on COVID-19.

On Wednesday, Biden launched his effort to fight the COVID-19 (<https://www.huffpost.com/news/topic/covid-19>) pandemic by issuing a mask mandate for federal property and federal contractors—and by asking people to wear masks in public for 100 days. Biden has said since the 2020 campaign that his first priority in office will be combatting the coronavirus, which has already killed more than 400,000 Americans while causing untold economic and psychic harm across the country.

(*HuffPost* (https://www.huffpost.com/entry/joe-biden-executive-order-covid-mask-mandate_n_600829a0c5b62c0057c1e5e4))

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