

# POLICY MATTERS

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**Pallasch Confirmed as ETA Assistant Secretary.** Today, by a [54-39 vote](#), the Senate confirmed John Pallasch to serve as the Assistant Secretary of Labor for the Employment and Training Administration. Pallasch is currently the Executive Director of Kentucky's Office of Employment and Training and previously served in the Bush 43 Department of Labor. At ETA, Pallasch will jump right in to two key policy areas for the Administration: immigration and apprenticeships.

**House Subcommittee to Tackle Apprenticeships.** The House subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment next week will hold a [hearing](#) entitled "Scaling Up Apprenticeships: Building on the 'Success of International Apprenticeship Models.'" Witnesses have not yet been announced.

**Sonderling Nominated for EEOC Slot.** Meanwhile, during the Independence Day break, President Trump [announced](#) his intent to nominate current Wage & Hour Division official (and former Acting Administrator) Keith Sonderling to serve as a Commissioner on the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Sonderling's nomination has been paired with current Commissioner Charlotte Burrows.

**States Taking Action on Gig Economy.** New York and California are each pushing legislation that would provide gig economy workers with certain rights. Yesterday, California's [AB 5](#), which would make it harder to classify gig workers as independent contractors, passed the Senate Committee on Labor, Public Employment, and Retirement. On the other side of the country, New York's Dependent Worker Act would provide the workers with the right to unionize and collectively bargain, as well as to pursue "wage theft" claims. For more on the New York bill, check out [Seyfarth's Employer Labor Relations blog post](#).

**Workforce Protections Subcommittee Deals with Excessive Heat.** Today, the House Subcommittee on Workforce Protections held a [hearing](#) on preventing workplace injury and death from excessive heat, featuring testimony from workers, academics, health and safety experts, and representatives of farm workers and farmers.

**"Per-Country" Bill Passes House.** Yesterday the House passed on the Suspension Calendar by the bipartisan vote of 365 – 65, H.R. 1044, the Fairness for High Skilled Immigrants Act of 2019, which would eliminate the existing per country cap of 7% of total employment based green cards. The bill also adjusts the family based cap from 7% to 15%. The end result of this legislation, which has been repeatedly introduced in past Congresses, would be to help clear the backlog of pending green card petitions from India, China and other countries. Passage of the bill on this wide bipartisan basis is a testament to the merits of the legislation and that the Majority and Minority can work together on immigration issues. Comparable legislation, S. 386, is pending in the Senate. However, certain senators are supporting changes to the bill which would seriously impair the H-1B employment process and therefore potentially undermine support for the bill overall. See our [BIG Immigration blog post](#).

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