

JUST THE FACTS: A Monthly Report on the 2020 Presidential Candidates

Spotlight on Worker Protections

Educators are on the frontline of this pandemic. They are responding to coronavirus by delivering meals, teaching lessons, maintaining school buildings, overseeing technology needs, and staying connected to their students. Although their work is essential, many education support professionals and other educators do not have the personal protective equipment (PPE) they need, so they face heightened risks. This equipment would not only protect them from possible infection and illness; it also would protect the communities in which they live and work.

As declines in state and local governments' budgets threaten [dramatic cuts to schools](#), ensuring that ESPs and other educators have PPE would enable them to continue doing essential work at a time of desperate need, while providing them the peace of mind they deserve. It is imperative that the [federal government show leadership and provide adequate resources](#) so that teachers, ESPs, and other school staff who interact with students and their families have access to PPE, training, and guidance on mitigating transmission of the coronavirus and that [emergency standards are put into place](#) to help protect frontline workers at risk of contracting the virus.

Here's what Democratic candidate Joe Biden has to say . . .

According to former Vice President Joe Biden, "[essential workers](#) . . . and state and local governments should get the help they need immediately." In his [Plan to Combat Coronavirus and Prepare for Future Global Health Threats](#), he has identified ways the federal government could help increase the supply of PPE. The former vice president recommends establishing "real-time dashboards . . . to track . . . the availability of personal protective equipment" and using "the strategic national stockpile . . . to supplement any shortages." He believes that "all frontline workers [should have access to] high-quality and appropriate personal protective equipment—and enough of it and appropriate training to use it—so they don't become infected."

Former Vice President Biden also would direct his administration to work "closely with state occupational safety and health agencies and state and local governments and the unions that represent their employees to ensure comprehensive protections for frontline workers." He finds that "[Donald Trump's foot-dragging and delays](#) have only made it more challenging for workers . . . [who] are putting themselves on the line every day."

Here's what Republican candidate President Donald Trump has to say . . .

As the [coronavirus claimed thousands of lives](#) and steadily infected upward of 1 million Americans, President Donald Trump described "[shortages of PPE as 'fake news.'](#)" In the midst of [decreasing poll numbers](#) and the realization that [coronavirus is not simply "going to go,"](#) President Trump [recently announced](#) an "initiative to replenish the national stockpile of personal protective equipment" months into the pandemic.

Previously, his plan for [Opening Up America Again](#) identified states as responsible for "protect[ing] the health and safety of workers in critical industries" and ensuring access to PPE. According to the President, the federal government is "not a shipping clerk," and he also [does not believe that it is responsible for the safety of workers](#) as he explores "support for a liability waiver that would clear businesses of legal responsibility from employees who contract the coronavirus on the job."

On a [recent visit with Republican U.S. Senators](#), President Trump did not discuss worker protections or additional resources to ensure the safety of Americans on the frontline. Instead, he "focused on poll numbers, Joe Biden, and telling senators they need to toughen up or they'll lose in November," making "no mention of state and local aid that desperate states are waiting for."