



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND LABOR



© U.S. Department of State



© Bhisham



© Romsrini

“The Labor Officer role is unique in a mission. It carries the responsibility to understand the ‘voice of the street’ and to take this perspective into country team meetings. This can be an incredibly authentic and powerful voice.”

-- Barbara Shailor, Special Representative for International Labor Affairs

Labor Officers in Action

Reporting and Responding to Worker Rights Across the Globe

Labor Officers in U.S. overseas missions play an integral role in advancing worker rights and helping the U.S. government to understand and respond to rapidly changing labor market conditions across the world. Labor Officers’ reporting and expertise helps inform U.S. policy on a wide range of issues from development assistance to trade agreements.

Overview of the Labor Officer Function

The Department of State has posted Labor Officers at U.S. Diplomatic Missions since the 1940s. The responsibilities of these officers include:

- Researching and reporting on key labor issues, including worker rights and labor relations;
- Advocating for improved worker rights standards;
- Cultivating contacts with labor organizations, governments, NGOs and private companies;
- Developing, supporting, and monitoring labor-related technical cooperation programs;
- Assisting Washington-based agencies in developing effective labor-related programming; and
- Contributing to the development of overall USG economic policies and engagement strategies.

Labor Diplomacy Around the World

Notable initiatives include:

- In **Colombia**, the Labor Officer actively monitored the implementation of the Labor Action Plan related to the U.S. – Colombia Free Trade Agreement (FTA). This plan expands the protection of labor leaders

and organizers, bolsters efforts to punish those who commit crimes against labor activists, and strengthens enforcement of labor laws.

- In **Vietnam**, the Labor Officer advanced labor rights by encouraging a change in government policy on forced labor in detention centers and by increasing understanding of labor issues in the Trans-Pacific FTA.

- Following the 2011 revolution in **Egypt**, the Labor Officer maintained close contact with independent labor unions and helped inform diplomatic approaches to the labor sector.

- In **Guatemala**, the Labor Officer provided timely and insightful information during the negotiations related to the labor submission under the CAFTA-DR, resulting in the successful negotiation of a robust Enforcement Plan to improve the effective enforcement of Guatemala’s labor laws.
- The Labor Officer in the **Philippines** provided invaluable reporting on domestic workers, child labor, programming assistance and informal economy issues.
- The successful launch of the **US-Brazil** labor dialogue was possible because of the labor team’s effort to advance labor diplomacy.

Did You Know...

Over 40 overseas posts have a Labor Officer.

For more information, contact the State Department’s Office of Labor Affairs (DRL/ILA) DRL-IL-DL@state.gov.

