

Employers Focused on Extended Remote Work, Impact of Presidential Election, Littler Survey Finds

Littler, the world's largest employment and labor law practice representing management, has released the results of the Littler Employer Pulse Survey Report. The survey was completed by representatives of nearly 1,100 companies in mid-October – seven months after the remote-work pivot necessitated by the coronavirus and just weeks before the 2020 presidential election.

With COVID-19 cases again surging in the United States, the reality of the extended remote work environment seems to have set in for respondents, which include in-house counsel, human resources professionals and C-suite executives. At this stage of the pandemic, the results show employers placing greater focus on employee well-being and maintaining company culture, while bracing for workplace policy changes that will come with the new presidential administration.

Workplace Culture and Employee Well-Being

Among respondents who have maintained a largely remote workforce during the pandemic, the majority are continuing remote work arrangements at least through the end of the year (57 percent) or gradually bringing employees back on a voluntary basis (25 percent). Only 18 percent are reopening and requiring more employees to return.

In this prolonged remote work environment, maintaining company culture and keeping employees content emerged as key areas of concern for employers. A strong majority (81 percent) report being at least somewhat concerned about the pandemic's impact

on employee mental health and well-being – and just two percent say they are not concerned at all. Seventy-five percent expressed the same level of concern about how the shift to remote work has impacted company culture, collaboration and employee loyalty.

Employers report taking a range of actions to address employee well-being during the pandemic, including offering more flexible work schedules (73 percent) and providing mental health services and Employee Assistance Programs (68 percent).

The 2020 Election

While the survey was conducted just prior to the November 3 election, the results suggest employers were already anticipating significant changes to workplace policy under a Biden administration.

Half of the employers surveyed expect an uptick in enforcement actions by the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration and its state counterparts regarding compliance with COVID-19 safety rules. Outside of the new presidential administration's COVID-19 response, respondents predict employment law-related changes in such areas as: paid sick and family leave requirements (74 percent), healthcare policy (71 percent), immigration (66 percent) and measures to address income inequality (64 percent).

Additional Key Findings

Other findings discussed in the report include:

- More than half of employers surveyed (56 percent) say they are struggling to navigate the various laws that apply to time off, scheduling and accommodation requests from employees with children whose education and care are affected by COVID-19.
- Amid renewed calls for racial justice and equality, supporting employees and addressing racism in the

workplace emerged as an area of concern. That concern was especially pronounced among companies with over 10,000 employees as 43 percent say they are extremely or moderately concerned about this issue (compared to 27 percent of all respondents).

- With COVID-19 accelerating technology's already prominent role in how companies operate, many employers report using technology or digital tools to manage their workforces during the pandemic. For instance, 55 percent of all respondents (and 70 percent of those whose companies have over 10,000 employees) are now using technology-driven recruiting and hiring tools