



APRIL 2021

LABOR N.C.

For all NCDOL Employees

FROM THE COMMISSIONER

The Commissioner's Column this month features part two of a two-part personal interview with Commissioner Josh Dobson. This month's column will focus on Commissioner Dobson's decision to run for commissioner of labor, his experience so far and his vision for the department. This interview was conducted by Jennifer Haigwood, director of communications and policy development.

Commissioner Dobson, our employees really enjoyed hearing about your personal and professional background in last month's edition. This month, we are going to hear about your decision to run for this position and your hopes for the department. Tell us a little about your decision-making process.

Well, I always said that I would only serve eight years in the N.C. House of Representatives. Not because of any sort of belief in term limits, but mainly because I ran for the House in order to accomplish specific policy goals that would substantially benefit North Carolinians. I wasn't interested in achieving a title like speaker or majority leader; rather, I was interested in playing a role on a major policy or appropriations committee. I was able to do that through my work on the Health Care Committee and as a senior appropriations chair and am proud of the work we accomplished in those areas.

How did you make the leap from the General Assembly to commissioner of labor?

I never wanted to run for office just for the sake of it. Other than the General Assembly, there were only two elected positions that really interested me: U.S. Congress and North Carolina Commissioner of Labor. However, my interest in Congress faded when I considered that I would be just one of 435 members, likely serving in the minority, with little opportunity to actually accomplish substantive policy goals. Also, the idea of being so far away from my wife and daughter made the position even less appealing. That left commissioner of labor – except I assumed that Cherie Berry would seek another term in the 2020 election cycle. I accepted that I would return home to western North Carolina, perhaps become involved in local government or non-profit work and take some time to consider what my future may hold. Then one day in April 2019, I started getting texts from friends letting me know that Commissioner Berry was not running for re-election. I didn't spend much time thinking about running. As I've learned, you have to take advantage of the moment. Overnight, everything changed, and I officially began my race for labor commissioner.

You seemed to run a very positive campaign and focused quite a bit on maintaining civil discourse. Tell us a little about your campaign experience.

After eight years serving Mitchell, McDowell and Avery counties in the N.C. House, preceded by several years of service on the McDowell County Board of Commissioners, I pretty much knew, or knew of, everyone in the district. I always ran successful campaigns, but I learned quickly that running a statewide campaign is a lot different, and more difficult, than running in a district. I, perhaps naively, believed that I could get my message out to every single person in North Carolina. And while I was not able to get my message out to a wide swath of North Carolinians during the campaign, I hope that I can get it out there over these next four years.

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FROM THE COMMISSIONER CONTINUED...

During the campaign, I was intent, perhaps stubborn, on not second guessing my predecessor [Commissioner Berry] or criticizing my opponent. I made up my mind early on that I was going to run my campaign in a way that I felt was right. I don't see much value in either second-guessing or attacking people – that's just not my style. And if it meant losing the race, so be it. But I'm grateful for the outcome of the race and the opportunity to serve in this position. The challenges of the campaign make me appreciate even more how fortunate I am to walk through the doors of the Labor Building every day.

Can you elaborate on your comments about civility in government and politics?

After 10 years in politics, I'm not naive to the challenges, but I'm optimistic. I said in my campaign that I would listen to all sides and take input from everyone, even those who have not always been on the same page as me. I hold true to my values and will try to incorporate other folks' ideas whenever possible. At some point, I will make decisions that will inevitably upset some people, but I want to honor my promise to understand other points of view and hear all sides of an issue.

You shared with us earlier that you continue to maintain your primary residence in McDowell County where your wife and daughter live full time. How are you managing the balance between home and work here in Raleigh?

It's a challenge, but we were already somewhat used to it based on the past eight years in the N.C. House. However, the difference is that the General Assembly had a definitive start and end to the legislative week (Monday evenings through Thursdays), and the session had a definitive start and end. As you know, my position now is full-time, Monday through Friday. I'm still adjusting to this schedule, but I think my wife and daughter may be more used to it than I am!

If anything, I've learned to be really intentional with the time that I do have at home. These days, when I go home for the weekend, we try to make it special. Maybe a weekend trip to Gatlinburg or a special dinner in Asheville. I try to focus on the quality of our time together rather than quantity. I am very intentional about not missing my daughter's volleyball and basketball games.

You have the opportunity to really make a difference as labor commissioner. What excites you the most about this position?

The honor and opportunity of serving in this role is not lost on me and I promised myself that I will not take these four years for granted. I'm not sure that I can point to one specific thing, but I'm truly excited about all the big things that we can accomplish here. And the wide range of opportunities, as corny as that sounds! Things like working with the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services on making sure that migrant workers can be tested for and vaccinated against COVID-19. Things like working on wage and hour issues to make sure that people are paid properly for the work that they perform. I enjoy working with stakeholders on finding ways to collaborate. All those things combined are what I'm really looking forward to.

Because of COVID restrictions, you haven't been able to meet many of our employees face-to-face. What would you like to say to our employees whom you haven't met yet?

I want all our employees to know that I plan to lead our agency with a high level of civility and customer service in mind. That's the approach I've taken in the past and I want to continue to be a leader in that way. In some cases, by the time a citizen reaches us, they have a real problem and I want to make sure that we help those citizens to the best of our ability. That's the tone I want to set at the department.

I, and my senior staff, can make all the decisions in the world. But compliance officers, inspectors and other boots-on-the-ground staff are the backbone of what we do. Even when my time is finished here, they will still be here doing the "blocking and tackling" of the department. They are the ones making the difference for the department, and I'm simply grateful for the chance to be part of that.

Commissioner Dobson, thank you for sharing so candidly with all of us. Do you have a parting thought you'd like to leave us with today?

I look forward to meeting as many of you as I can, as soon as I can. Thank you for all of the work you do for the department and for our state. You did this work long before I got here, and I'm just proud to be part of it now. Together, we're going to make a difference for North Carolina.

EMPLOYEE NEWS

- Congratulations to Lee Peacock, OSH West, for passing the Associate Safety Professional certification exam.
- As a government employee, you are now eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. All adults are eligible on April 7. Remember that state employees are permitted to get the vaccine during the workday without taking leave time. Find out more on Page 5.

NEW HIRES

- Millie Chevere, OSH West, administrative associate, Charlotte

SEPARATIONS

- Cecilia Williams, Wage and Hour, investigator, Raleigh
- Maria Gonzalez Moreno, ASH, administrative specialist, Raleigh
- Andrew Doyle, Elevator and Amusement Device, elevator inspector, Winston-Salem
- Kathy Dale, Financial Services, procurement specialist, Raleigh

RETIREMENTS

- Michael Hopper, Elevator and Amusement Device, elevator inspector, Reidsville
- Dawn Reynolds, OSH West, OSHA industrial hygienist, Charlotte
- Ed Geddie, ETTA, OSHA health consultant, Raleigh



Happy 16th birthday to Art Britt, chief of staff! (Give or take a few years...)

Commissioner Dobson got his COVID-19 vaccine at Caldwell UNC Health Care's vaccine clinic on March 19 in Lenoir. Left to right: Rocky Brooks, director, marketing and public relations at Caldwell UNC Health Care; Jennifer Haigwood, director of communications and policy development; and Susan Mullins, executive assistant.



April Birthdays!

2 Marcia Page

3 Andrew Gunto

4 Jeff Mitchell

6 Bart Evans

9 Katharine Braak

9 Blair Byrd

9 Sam Kirkman

9 Mark Rasdall

10 Robert Olman

17 Rob Jacobson

19 Crystal Williams

20 Matt Gruber

20 Erin Smith

20 Wesley Tart

21 Keyana Kimbrough

23 Dean Johnson

26 LaTara Barrow

26 Jerick Valerio

27 Chuck Murdock

28 Leaton Jones

29 Merville Forrester

29 Crystal Stallings

29 Jill Warren

INSIDE NC LABOR

Be sure to check out NCDOL's *Inside NC Labor*, a podcast designed to inform and educate North Carolina citizens on the role that the Department of Labor plays in state government.

Episode 41 features Dr. Mandy Cohen, N.C. Department of Health and Human Services secretary, and Labor Commissioner Dobson as they discuss the vaccine rollout process, how to find your spot, take your shot and other pertinent information concerning COVID-19 vaccines.

Inside NC Labor is now available on YouTube, Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Anchor and Google Podcasts.



Financial Services Division Update



By Jennifer Stackpole, CFO

The Office of State Budget and Management (OSBM) has revised its travel policy concerning mileage reimbursement as to when it is necessary for employees to use their personal vehicles for official state business. OSBM has eliminated from its policy any round trips in excess of 100 miles, which is currently being reimbursed at 33 cents per mile.

Effective April 1, 2021, the reimbursement amount will be the IRS rate of 56 cents per mile based on actual mileage. Employees eligible to drive a state issued vehicle but opting to drive a personal vehicle on a permanent basis shall continue being reimbursed at the Motor Fleet Management rate of 33 cents per mile.

A revised travel reimbursement form will be posted on the **NCDOL Intranet** for your April reimbursement of expenses.



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HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE

Effective March 31, state employees not previously eligible for vaccination against COVID-19 will become eligible as part of Group 4. To learn more about the vaccine and how to find a local provider, please visit **YourSpotYourShot.nc.gov**. To make it easier for state employees to receive the vaccine, the Office of State Human Resources has approved a variance that allows you to get your COVID-19 vaccination during the workday without losing pay. Please work with your supervisor to obtain approval before scheduling your vaccination.

If you already used personal leave for this purpose, please contact your supervisor to request a retroactive correction. If you experience a reaction that prevents you from returning to work, on the day of the vaccine or the following day, you may be eligible to use Administrative Leave/Communicable Disease Emergency – so long as you have not previously used the one-time, 80-hour allocation of Administrative Leave/CDE. A doctor's note will be required to use Administrative Leave/CDE for a second day. If you have already used the one-time allocation of 80 hours of Administrative Leave/CDE, please contact our Human Resources Office to learn about other options that may be available to you.

Call your NC EAP at 1.888.298.3907 to schedule an appointment.
Phones are answered 24/7/365, and free, confidential appointments are available in person, virtually, or telephonically.

Access your Work-Life Services at mygroup.com or download the app. *Resources include discounted legal and financial services, the savings center, and child and elder care locators.*



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YOU HAVE A
SPOT. | TAKE YOUR
SHOT.

COVID-19 Vaccines: Take your best shot against COVID-19.



Protect yourself and everyone else.

Here's your shot to get back to the people and places you love.

You'll soon be able to take a safe vaccine that will protect you and others from getting COVID-19. It will be free of charge. Here's what you need to know:

- **Scientists had a head start.** In fact, they built on years of work to develop the vaccine.
- **You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine.** And there were no serious safety concerns noted in clinical trials. You may have a temporary reaction like a sore arm, fever, headache or feeling tired and achy for a day or two.
- **Millions of people in the U.S. have already received their COVID-19 vaccine.**
- **It works. And you're protected.** Vaccines were found to help prevent COVID-19 and are effective in preventing hospitalization and death.
- **Your privacy is protected at all times.** No personal information will be sent to the CDC or ICE.
- **Supply will be limited at first.** But everyone has a spot to take their shot.
- **Go to YourSpotYourShot.nc.gov for information. You can also call the COVID-19 Vaccine Help Center toll-free at 1-888-675-4567.** Find out about the vaccines and where you'll be able to take your best shot against COVID-19.

What's New @Your Library

Online Resources

- **COVID-19 Spanish Resources Page.** NIH webpage.
- **Fatal Injury Trends in the Construction Industry.** February 2021. CPWR's Data Bulletin.
- **Health Care Facility Oxygen Fire Safety.** CGA poster.
- **Injection Safety for COVID-19 Vaccinators and Vaccine Administrators....**NIEHS document.
- **OSHA Guidance On Mitigating And Preventing The Spread Of COVID-19 In The Workplace.** Recorded webinar posted on CPWR's YouTube channel.
- **Protecting Miners: MSHA Guidance on Mitigating and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19.** MSHA webpage.
- **Safety + Health. March 2021.** NSC Publication.
- **NFPA Journal.** Spring 2021.
- **NIH News in Health.** March 2021.
- **OSHA Launches Program To Protect High-risk Workers From Coronavirus, Focuses On Employers That Retaliate Against Workers With Safety Concerns.** OSHA news release.
- **PocketPrep.** Free app designed for preparing for the CSP exam.

Periodicals

- *Bulletin.* Winter 2021. National Board and Pressure Vessel Inspectors, 2021.
- *Professional Safety.* February 2021. American Society of Safety Professionals, 2021. *Donated by Phil Hooper, Standards and Inspections.*
- *Safety + Health.* March 2021. National Safety Council, 2021. *Donated by Wanda Lagoe, ETTA.*

New Books

- *Jon Preston's Trench and Excavation Safety: By the Book.* TA 730.P74 2019. Jon Preston's Trench and Excavation Safety, 2019.
- *OSHA Construction Industry Standards....*KFN 7736.C6 D38 2020. NCDOL OSH, 2020.
- *OSHA General Industry Standards....* T55.72.N8. L34 2019. NCDOL OSH, 2019.
- *Scheme for the Identification of Piping Systems.* ASME A13.1-2020. ASME, 2020.
- *Specifications for Concrete Construction.* ACI 301-2020. ACI, 2020.
- *Standard Specification for Dry-Cast Segmental Retaining Wall Units.* ASTM C1372-17. ASTM, 2017.