



## RECAP: SOLUTIONS 2020 BRIEFING WITH GOVERNOR STEVE BULLOCK

SEPTEMBER 2019



Business Forward conducted a *Solutions 2020* briefing with Governor Steve Bullock on September 17th, 2019. This is our eighth briefing in the *Solutions 2020: Real-world Recommendations for the Next President* series.

Business leaders shared their comments, suggestions, and questions on issues ranging from bipartisanship to trade to the gender pay gap.

### **Health Care**

On expanding affordable health care to all Americans, Bullock outlined his support for a public option, building off of our current health care law. He also stressed the importance of negotiating lower prescription drug prices and passing legislation to curb surprise medical bills.

*"[To] completely throw out all the gains made under the Affordable Care Act and start over and disrupt the lives of about 165 million people on employer-sponsored health care doesn't seem to me like the right direction, both from a policy perspective and also [for] winning this election."*

### **Bipartisanship**

Referencing his success at finding common ground between Republicans and Democrats in Montana, business leaders submitted several questions on how Bullock plans to foster bipartisanship in Washington. Bullock highlighted his visits to Republican districts in Montana to listen to constituents' concerns. Through these conversations, the issues became more personal and less political.

*"I typically begin with the base assumption that most folks' lives are too frantic or busy or hectic to care about politics. But the values people have are...you want a safe community, you want a decent job, you want clean air, clean water, roof over your head, good public schools.... So I always frame that in those values and that is in some ways how I've been able to find a lot of common ground to get things done."*

## **Future of Work**

On the future of work, business leaders asked Bullock how he planned to improve skills and raise wages for Americans as more jobs become automated. Bullock referenced the work he has done as chair of the National Governor's Association, spearheading a year-long initiative called Good Jobs for All Americans. Its mission is to address the economic disparity between workers who benefit from new technological advances and those who are displaced as a result of them.

He acknowledged the differences between urban and rural communities when it comes to creating jobs and attracting employers to locate in certain areas: "And you know, we've done things recognizing that a new employer [of eight] in a small town ... is bigger than and more significant than an employer of 80 or 800 in a large town. We've tried to create the opportunities for that to occur."

## **Trade**

In the Business Forward network, there's a general consensus that Trump's trade policies have been harmful to our most important industries. Bullock agreed that Trump's trade policy isn't working, adding that, "we've got to begin with base presumption that we have 5% of the world's population and we can't just build up barriers and say that our businesses and our workers are going to succeed if we cut off the relationship to the outside world."

When asked about what his trade policy would look like, Bullock responded: "When I'm looking at a trade deal, I'm also going to be looking at both labor protocols, environmental protocols along the way, and [they] have to be part of the consideration in entering a trade agreement. Because if not, I think we're really, really going to be missing something along the way and we're going to see further displacement."

## **Gender Gap**

Six out of ten business leaders in Business Forward's network are women. Many business leaders submitted questions asking what Bullock would do to close the gender pay gap. He outlined a few policies he would pursue: preventing employers from asking applicants about their previous salaries in order to prevent pay inequities from following women from job to job, incentivizing payroll audits, ensuring that employees cannot be disciplined for asking what other employees are making, and establishing paid family leave legislation.

*“Right now, one in four mothers return to work within 10 days of giving birth and rates are even higher among women of color and low-income communities. And getting to the point where we have a dozen weeks of paid leave could not only substantially impact those families but also help address some of the inherent challenges that women often face in the workplace.”*

With the help of more than 60 of America's most respected companies, Business Forward is making it easier for more than 100,000 business leaders from across America to advise Washington on how to create jobs and accelerate our economy. More than 650 mayors, governors, members of Congress, and senior Administration officials have participated in our briefings.

Business leaders who have participated in our briefings have seen their suggestions implemented in the Affordable Care Act, the JOBS Act, the Clean Power Plan, the Toxic Substances Control Act, three trade agreements, and the President's budgets. Many have also shared their recommendations with their representatives in Congress and through phone calls, op-eds, and interviews with local media. Ninety-eight out of 100 business leaders who have participated in a Business Forward briefing would be interested in participating in another one.

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