



# Celebrity Apprentice: Head of OSHA Edition. Which Celebrities Are Qualified to Lead the Occupational Safety and Health Administration?

Insights

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On October 27, 2017, Scott Mugno was nominated by President Donald Trump to lead the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) as the agency's assistant secretary of labor. Mugno is the former head of Federal Express' Safety, Health and Fire Protection division, a strong believer in employee safety, and is extremely qualified for this post. Unfortunately, however, Mugno has not yet been confirmed by Congress to take the position and OSHA remains without a leader.

While we wait for Mugno's confirmation, my colleagues and I find it entertaining to toss around the names of others who would make a good head of OSHA, especially celebrities who may fit the bill. Given Donald Trump's transformation from former star of *The Celebrity Apprentice* to President of the United States, it's fun to consider which household names may make good leaders of the country's safety enforcement agency.

Here's a list of potential *Celebrity Apprentice: Head of OSHA* "contestants":

1. **Bruce Springsteen-** The "Boss" is a natural selection to lead OSHA because of his blue collar, hard-knocks roots, and his ties to New Jersey, which is not only a federal OSHA state, but also very pro-union, which follows the modern trend of the national safety agency. Springsteen's hits are likewise a collection of ballads dedicated to the working man and woman, and some even specifically reference working in harsh conditions. Here are some examples: first, from the lyrics of *Born in the U.S.A.*, where Springsteen references the difficult working environment at a local plant in his native New Jersey:

Down in the shadow of the penitentiary  
Out by the gas fires of the refinery  
I'm ten years burning down the road  
Nowhere to run ain't got nowhere to go

And this reference to tough road crew work (and the union) in *Working on the Highway*:

Working on the highway, laying down the blacktop  
Working on the highway all day long I don't stop

working on the highway, all day long I don't stop

Working on the highway, blasting through the bedrock . . .

I met her at a dance down at the union hall

2. **Dan Rather-** Rather is no stranger to workplace violence, as he was famously the victim of an attack in Manhattan in 1986 due to his occupation as a reporter. The assailants, who confronted the defenseless Rather as he was walking home alone, attacked the reporter on a sidewalk and then in a building lobby, all the while repeating the same words: "Kenneth, what is the frequency?" Apparently, Rather's attackers not only wrongly believed his name was Kenneth, but also that they were being brainwashed by the news media and wanted to know the "frequency" used by Rather's television station to control their minds. American society was fascinated by the unusual attack, and especially the attackers' bizarre words, which inspired an emerging alt-rock band from Athens, Georgia, called R.E.M., to write the now infamous track, *What's the Frequency Kenneth?*
3. **Melissa McCarthy-** Not only would McCarthy's experience growing up on a farm in rural Illinois, another federal OSHA state, make her an excellent choice for leader of OSHA, she also owns her own clothing manufacturing company, which undoubtedly faces safety concerns. She also once famously claimed to be taking "flight marshal" duty in *Bridesmaids*, to ensure the safety of her fellow passengers aboard a plane.
4. **Billy Bob Thornton-** Thornton, like Springsteen, comes from blue collar roots. Raised in a shack without electricity or plumbing in Arkansas, Thornton worked several jobs that would serve him well as the director of OSHA, including laying asphalt for the Arkansas State Transportation Department, an offshore wind farming gig, and work in restaurant management. These experiences would help OSHA-head Thornton relate to the concerns of the hard working men and women the agency is designed to protect. Given his humble beginnings, Thornton may also, like Springsteen, sympathize with unions.
5. **Richard Marx-** In December 2016, the 1980s pop singer prevented an unruly passenger aboard a Korean Air flight from harming the aircraft's attendants. When the passenger began pushing the female flight crew and pulling their hair, co-passenger Marx was the first on the scene to subdue the disruptive traveler. Remarkably, Marx controlled the attacker for a reported four hours.

OSHA-head Marx would be heavy on enforcement. Following the Korean Air flight, Marx was critical of the lack of training the flight crew had apparently received to handle the disruptive situation. He claimed on social media that the crew was "completely ill-prepared and untrained," and that "Korean Air should be sanctioned for not knowing how to handle a situation like this without passenger interference." Adding to his resume, Marx once penned a popular song in 1992 called "Hazard."

6. **Ice Cube** – Cube has the background to be a great leader of the national safety agency. The rapper and business owner worked several blue collar jobs as a young man, including as a groundskeeper at UCLA and a machinist, before making a name in the music industry. His

mother and father would be likely to appreciate workplace safety too, having served in humble positions such as a hospital clerk and custodian, respectively. In addition to his safety-related albums *Death Certificate*, *Lethal Injection*, and *Terrorist Threats*, Cube also starred in the appropriately named movie *Dangerous Ground*.

7. **John Goodman**- Like Springsteen and Thornton, Goodman would bring his humble roots to Washington as the OSHA head. Not only did Goodman work the blue collar jobs of waiter and bartender before making it big, he has also spoken on a national stage about the importance of safety and the prevention of accidents. In 2010, Goodman appeared in a commercial to raise awareness regarding the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, which led to one of the largest OSHA penalties in history.
8. **Ric Flair** – “the limousine riding, jet flying, wheelin n’ dealin,’ son of a gun” Flair would be a great leader of OSHA. Not only is Flair a wrestling legend and the ultimate blue-collar icon, which would allow him to connect to workers perhaps better than any other “contestant,” but he has also dabbled in Republican politics (having endorsed Mike Huckabee and Ted Cruz), making him a logical choice for OSHA head under the Trump Administration.

Although it has been a long and slow process, we remain confident that Scott Mugno will eventually be confirmed as OSHA’s new leader and perform extremely well in that role. While we wait, however, it’s fun to imagine an OSHA under one of our favorite celebrities. If you have any other potential leaders of the national safety enforcement agency in mind, let us know.

### ***Related People***



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