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## Now is not the time for Congress to make job-training cuts

TERRY A. HAYES AND LINDA NGUYEN  
LAST UPDATED: MARCH 10TH, 2011 12:21 AM (PST)

This is the worst time to consider federal cuts to job training and placement programs for people in need – people who increase the productivity and competitive-ness at local companies. When unemployment hovers more than 9 percent, investing in those who need work the most can repay such funds many times over.

We understand the action last month by the U.S. House would cut an estimated \$3.8 billion from the federal Department of Labor’s job-training programs and make other drastic cuts to human services, including axing federal employment and training programs under the Workforce Investment Act.

The impact of those cuts and federal budget uncertainty is already being felt. As of April, local agencies will cease receiving WIA dollars focusing on young adults. It will mean a loss of \$1 million in services to our most precious resource and hope for the future – as many as 500 young adults could be immediately affected. This is unacceptable.

The impact of the WIA and House cuts on Tacoma Goodwill? A loss of nearly half the \$5 million we receive in federal funding. But what budget people describe as “impact,” we know by name: Misti Seiss of Tacoma, 19, for example.

Misti now has an eye toward college courses in emergency medicine after taking the Youth Barista Training program at our REACH Center for at-risk young adults. When she was younger, she was put into foster care and overcame abuse and other challenges.

Without WIA, many programs for young adults would be severely hurt. In fact, the REACH Center helped more than 1,800 at-risk young adults in 2010. Many of these people are high school dropouts, with no hope and no place to go. With support, they have opportunities to get back into school, acquire their GED or learn a job skill.

Other programs, such as the Warehouse & Logistics training program – which assists people in Tacoma, Longview and Yakima through a partnership with Tacoma Community College and Goodwill – could be lost outright as a result of the proposed cuts.

A program to help low-income senior workers get jobs would be cut by more than two-thirds – hurting many of those who have seen their retirement plans destroyed as the economy failed.

Overall, the proposed cuts in job training would be catastrophic and threaten the fabric of our community.

In Pierce County, WorkForce Central administers WIA funding and supports an extensive employment development system. WorkSource offices provide employment and education services to 60,000 residents and assist 1,000 businesses in finding the qualified talent needed to stay competitive.

Statewide, the WIA funds 64 one-stop centers and affiliate sites that provide employment, education and training services. Last program year, 400,000 Washington residents were assisted and 213,000 people were enrolled in WIA-funded programs – a 211 percent increase compared with the previous year. Of that total, more than 75 percent of the adults and 63 percent of youth found jobs in the community.

Now those are results worth keeping.

The time is now to speak out about the impacts of these cuts and emphasize the importance and effectiveness of workforce development in our economic recovery. Because jobs change lives.

Terry A. Hayes is president and CEO of Tacoma Goodwill, a nonprofit business that uses donations, thrift stores and other resources to help disadvantaged people prepare for jobs. Linda Nguyen is CEO of