

HOT TOPICS Primary election | State budget | Springfield city budget | High speed rail | Snow |

Letters to the Editor:

THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER

Posted Dec 20, 2009 @ 12:05 AM

State must focus on 'middle-skill' training

The days when a "three Rs" education was sufficient to provide a middle-class lifestyle are long over. Though jobs requiring low-level skills still exist (just 18 percent of Illinois jobs), they no longer pay enough to provide access to home ownership and a comfortable retirement.

Surveys show most Americans believe earning a college degree is essential to success. Yet only about 39 percent of Americans have earned either a two- or four-year degree. That has led the Lumina Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and President Barack Obama to call for a national effort to increase college graduation rates, particularly at the two-year degree level. Focusing on two-year degrees is particularly important because in the next decade, 41 percent of Illinois jobs will be "middle-skill" jobs, requiring more education than a high school diploma but less than a bachelor's degree. And these jobs can provide access to a middle-class lifestyle.

What are middle-skills jobs? They range from engineering technicians to health-care professionals, paralegals, automotive technicians, construction managers, heating/air conditioning repairers and more — offering annual salaries as high as \$70,000.

This year, Illinois high schools and community colleges will receive \$105.7 million in state and federal funds for career and technical education programs. But this funding has been on the chopping block. During this year's budget deliberations, career and technical education funding was nearly eliminated. Funding was only restored because the cut would have resulted in Illinois losing an additional \$48.9 million in federal education money.

H Yh fYUhcZfUg jVWlg`cca gYj Yb`Lf[Yf Zf`&S%"5gh Y[cj Yfbcf`UbX`Y[]gUrcfgV[]b bY hmYUg Vi X[YhXgWgg]cbgzh Y
="]bc]g7ca a i b]mi7c`Y[YHfi gHYg5ggVU]cb i f[Ygh Ya`rc`_Yd WYf UbXhWb]W`Yi W]cb Ugdfcb[df]cf]hYg";]j Yb h Y
]a dcf]UbWcZa]XX]g.]`g`cVgtr`ci f g]Uhzk YWbbchUZfXW]g]b h YgY]]U`dfc[fUa g'

6UFVU8"C]gWU]Yf
DfYg]Xbh
="]bc]g7ca a i b]mi7c`Y]Y
Hfi gHYg5ggVU]cb
: fUg]U_Y

Tools

- Print
- Comment
- ShareThis