



Loebsack responds to unemployment figures: That's not what I hear in my District

Bipartisan SECTORS Act reintroduced

By [Lynda Waddington](#) | 04.01.11 | 12:38 pm

The U.S. economy added 216,000 jobs in March to beat economists' predictions. The additions dropped the nation's overall unemployment rate from 8.9 to 8.8 percent, but U.S. Rep. Dave Loebsack says there's more that can be done.

"I come home every weekend, and what I hear time and time again from constituents is that our country's unemployment rate is still too high," [Loebsack](#) said Friday in response to the U.S. Department of Labor's announcement of unemployment figures.

"There are far too many Iowans who are still struggling, and our priority must be job creation and economic development. In order to get our country back on track, we need to start building things in America again and support our country's workforce."

Specifically, Loebsack wants more attention placed on his Strengthening Employment Clusters to Organize Regional Success (SECTORS) Act, which passed the U.S. House unanimously last year and was reintroduced days ago by Loebsack and U.S. Rep. Todd Russell Platts, a Pennsylvania Republican. The legislation supports "sector" or "industry partnerships" that allow businesses, unions, educators and the public workforce development system to create and implement plans to help workers train for and advance in emerging industries. Sister legislation has also been introduced in the U.S. Senate by Sens. Olympia Snowe and Sherrod Brown.

"By matching workers' skills and training programs to the needs of industries looking to hire, expand or start-up we can connect workers with industries, helping ensure America remains at the forefront of manufacturing and paving the way for the industries of tomorrow, right here at home," said Loebsack, a Democrat that represents Iowa's 2nd District.

SECTORS includes grants that will allow the partners to address training needs of multiple employers, help post-secondary educational institutions and other training providers align curricula and programs to meet industry demands, and improve workers' job quality through improving wages, benefits, and working conditions while also encouraging the creation, and obtaining of, nationally portable, industry-recognized credentials. It will also help businesses and industries recruit new workers, retrain dislocated and current workers, adopt new technologies, and strengthen connections among businesses in the targeted industry cluster.

"It is more important than ever to invest federal dollars in efficient, cost-effective strategies with proven results," said Andy Van Kleunen, executive director for [National Skills Coalition](#). "While some policymakers in Washington have turned their backs on America's workers and industries by calling for the elimination of federal workforce funding, Congressman Loebsack has instead called for better, more effective approaches to

training our workforce. We applaud his leadership in championing solutions that will enable our education and training institutions to better meet the needs of regional industries and provide pathways to good jobs for unemployed Americans.”

According to the [Labor Department](#), the private sector accounted for all new job growth in March. Government employment fell by 14,000, part of an ongoing series of public-sector cuts. The new national percentage is the lowest the nation has seen in two years, although the total number of unemployed has stagnated at about 13.5 million.

“Private employment has now grown for 13 consecutive months, with February and March showing the strongest growth since early 2006,” Secretary Hilda L. Solis said in a prepared statement. “And since its low point in February 2010, private sector employment has risen by 1.8 million. The bottom line: The policies and programs of this administration are working.”

Loebsack’s bill has garnered support from workforce and vocational organizations, manufacturing associations, colleges and universities, businesses, chambers of commerce, and training and human services organizations across the country. It has also, along with numerous other bills with Democratic sponsors, drawn [criticism](#) from [Phyllis Schlafly](#), president of the anti-feminist [Eagle Forum](#), for subsidizing unmarried women and eliminating the need for husband-breadwinners.