

## Training crucial to labor market

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This recession has caused a generational restructuring of America's labor market.

Many job skills in high demand 20 years ago just aren't today, and some of the fastest-growing careers now weren't even conceivable then. That's why this administration is refocusing job-training efforts to give workers the skills they'll need to compete successfully in a 21st century labor market.

Recently, there has been a lot of attention on workers who lost jobs through no fault of their own in this recession. Of these "dislocated workers" who have completed Labor Department job-training programs, 85 percent have found jobs. But even in a recession, those percentages aren't good enough. So we are doing more.

Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, we have invested \$500 million in green job-training grants for careers in the energy-efficiency and renewable-energy industries — both of which are expected to grow significantly. We asked these grant recipients to tailor their training programs to meet the needs of occupations and skills identified as "in demand" within their area. This allows us to link job-training programs with actual jobs.

In addition, we invested \$225 million in health care and high-growth training grants, also funded through the Recovery Act. Health care-sector jobs have continued to grow throughout this recession, and this growth is expected to continue as the American population ages.

We also developed local-level partnerships with businesses, community colleges, states and other groups to ensure that we are training workers in fields where there are, or will be, jobs. These include registered nurses, nursing aides, licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses, health information technicians and radiology and pharmacy technicians.

The Recovery Act allowed us to respond to the unique circumstances of this recession. But we intend to continue to push for reforms that link relevant training to real jobs.

Recently, the House took a first step toward funding new Workforce Investment Act Innovation Funds, an Obama administration proposal that should reform the nation's work-force investment system from the inside — building on what works, and, most important, closely connecting job training to job opportunities.

We want to take it a step further. We are now working closely with Congress to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act so it better meets the changing needs of today's economy and work force.

As the economy recovers, the labor market will continue to evolve. To remain competitive, we need to ensure that industry has the labor it needs to innovate and expand, and that

displaced workers have the skills to compete for these new jobs.

To do that, training is key.

*Hilda Solis is secretary of labor.*

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