



Washington Update

Developments in Federal Workforce Policy

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Higher Education

Student Aid Reconciliation Bill Passes House, Moves to Senate

On September 17th, the House passed the “[Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009](#)” (H.R. 3221) by a vote of 253-171. Incorporating a number of proposals made by President Obama as part of his [American Graduation Initiative](#), the bill would replace the current Federal Family Education Loan program with direct government loans, generating about \$87 billion in savings that will go towards increases in the Pell Grant, school construction, and early childhood education. The bill also makes significant investments in community college capacity, providing \$600 million for each of Fiscal Years 2010 through 2014 for a new College Access and Completion Innovation Fund. The bill also provides \$630 million for each of Fiscal Years 2010-2013 for a new Community College Initiative creating competitive grants to community colleges and other eligible entities for innovative programs leading to completion of a postsecondary degree, certificate, or industry-recognized credential. For Fiscal Years 2014-2019, the grants switch to states for implementation of systematic reforms of junior and community colleges located in the state by carrying out programs, services, and policies that demonstrated effectiveness under the prior competitive grants.

During floor debate, the House adopted several amendments that would make the bill more effective for working adults, including a manager’s amendment from Rep. George Miller (D-CA) that clarifies that both full-time and part-time students are eligible to receive awards under the year-round Pell Grant program, and amendments from Rep. May Jo Kilroy (D-OH) and Rep. Steve Driehaus (D-OH) to encourage community colleges to work with dislocated workers. These amendments came on the heels of other key provisions added during committee markup, including an amendment introduced by Rep. Dave Loebsack (D-IA) and Marcia Fudge (D-OH) to give grant priority to community colleges and other entities that work with industry or sector partnerships to improve access to relevant job training and education.

The bill now moves to the Senate, where it is widely expected that these provisions will move as part of a larger reconciliation bill (the timing of which remains somewhat unclear).

This legislation represents an important investment in programs and partnerships that will help workers get the skills they need to get and keep family-supporting employment. Workforce development professionals should weigh in with their Senators and urge them to ensure that the final bill retains its focus on industry or sector partnerships and access for nontraditional students; encourages better articulation between credit and noncredit coursework; rewards institutions for increased attainment of all credentials, not just associate’s degrees; and includes a role for community-based organizations and other providers to ensure low-skill, low-wage workers can access developmental and supportive services.



Budget and Appropriations

Congress Passes Continuing Resolution, Status of FY2010 Labor-HHS Appropriations Still Unclear

The Senate on September 30th adopted a continuing resolution (CR) to fund all other federal programs and activities through the end of October. The House had passed a similar measure by a vote of 217-190 on September 25th. The passage of the CR will provide some breathing room for Congress to move some of the remaining Fiscal Year 2010 spending bills, although it is unclear at this point whether the bill funding the Departments of Labor, Education and Health and Human Services will be among those considered in the short term. The House passed their [Labor-HHS bill](#) (H.R. 3293) in late July; the Senate appropriations committee passed [their version](#) on July 30th, but it has yet to receive floor consideration by the full chamber. With Congress facing pressure on a range of priorities, including health care reform, it appears that for now they will focus on completing the five remaining appropriations bills that have already passed the Senate, and may be required to roll the remaining bills into another short-term CR at the end of the month.

Both the House and Senate Labor-HHS appropriations bills would maintain state formula funding under the Workforce Investment Act at Fiscal Year 2009 levels, although they differ in some other respects. The House bill appropriates \$135 million to support a Career Pathways Innovation Fund that was included as part of President Obama's Fiscal Year 2010 budget request; the Senate would fund at \$95 million, but would make an additional \$30 million available for career pathways programs under the Dislocated Worker National Reserve Fund. The House bill would provide \$45 million for a Green Jobs Innovation Fund that would support green job training and employment activities, about \$5 million less than the President's request, while the Senate would provide \$40 million for green jobs. The Senate bill also includes \$40 million to support transitional jobs programs, while the House would provide \$50 million, in line with the President's overall budget request. You can view a chart comparing the House and Senate bills [here](#).

Whether the Labor-HHS bill advances this month or not, workforce development professionals should continue to weigh in with policymakers about the critical importance of maintaining current funding levels for job training and employment services. With state fiscal crises blunting much of the impact from Recovery Act funding, and continued fiscal pressures on the federal level, there is always a risk that workforce dollars could be diverted to other programs and priorities if lawmakers are not hearing from you. It is vitally important that your representatives on Capitol Hill understand how workforce development dollars are being used to help individuals and businesses acquire the skills they need to rebuild our economy.



Department of Labor

DOL Hosts “Recovery and Reemployment” Conference

The Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration (ETA) hosted a [“Recovery and Reemployment”](#) conference in Washington, DC on September 15-16. The conference served as a forum for past and current research on a broad range of topics, including workshops on the economic impacts of sector partnership programs on participant earnings, effective implementation of career pathways and career ladder models, and innovative approaches to engaging youth, dislocated workers, and low-income and low-skilled adults. The Department of Labor is in the process of posting materials from the conference on the [Reemployment Works](#) website.

One highlight of the conference was a plenary session featuring Cecilia Rouse from the Council of Economic Advisors (CEA) and Robert Gordon of the Office of Management and Budget. Rouse addressed the findings in the recent CEA report, [Preparing the Workers of Today for the Jobs of Tomorrow](#), which emphasized the key role of education and training in rebuilding the nation’s economy. Gordon affirmed that the Obama administration is interested in reauthorizing the Workforce Investment Act, and indicated that the administration may roll out recommendations for that process in the next few months.

The Workforce Alliance applauds ETA for convening the conference, and for placing renewed emphasis on research and evaluation in job training and employment services. Effective research is the key to innovation and improvement, and we look forward to working with ETA and the rest of the workforce development field to assess current practices and identify new approaches to workforce service delivery.



Other Workforce Development News

Harkin Takes Chair of Senate HELP Committee; Bennet Elected to Replace Kennedy on Panel

In the wake of the tragic death of Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA), Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) has been appointed to serve as chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, while Sen. Michael Bennet (D-CO) was elected to Kennedy’s slot on the panel. As chair, Harkin will lead the committee’s efforts around the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act (H.R. 3221) and will work closely with Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA), chair of the Employment and Workplace Security subcommittee, towards reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act. Harkin will also continue to serve as chair of the Labor-HHS Appropriations

subcommittee, where he has long championed investments in education and workforce development.

The Workforce Alliance congratulates Sens. Harkin and Bennet on their new positions, and we look forward to working with their offices to usher in the next era of federal workforce development policy.

New Federal Agencies Focusing on Workforce Development

In June, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) issued a [Notice of Funding Availability](#) for \$995 million in Capital Fund Recovery Competition (CFRC) grants for Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) to support a range of capital improvement and management activities. Of this total, approximately \$600 million is being made available for grants that “facilitate transformational energy efficiency and ‘green’ retrofits to substantively increase energy efficiency and environmental performance of public housing properties.” Applicants for these grants are expected to ensure that training and employment opportunities connected with the grants are directed to low- and very low-income individuals, and points are awarded to applicants that can demonstrate partnerships with their local workforce boards and with other organizations, including community- and faith-based organizations and community colleges, that can help connect public housing residents to employment and training. Applications for the CFRC grants were due from PHAs on August 18th, with funds expected to be obligated by September 30th.

Labor Secretary Solis and HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan issued a [joint letter](#) in May encouraging partnerships between PHAs and local workforce investment boards, and earlier this month DOLETA issued a [Training and Employment Notice](#) (TEN) providing guidance on how workforce and public housing agencies can work together in support of these goals. Training providers and other workforce advocates should review both the DOL-HUD letter and the TEN and consider exploring partnership opportunities with local PHAs. Workforce advocates should also be familiar with the [Memorandum of Understanding](#) between the Departments of Labor, Education, and Energy to encourage cross-agency communication around green job opportunities created through Recovery Act investments, and to connect those job opportunities to education and training services.

Access to job training and related services has also been a topic of interest for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The Recovery Act authorized \$7.2 billion for the extension of broadband infrastructure and services in rural and underserved areas. In addition, the law requires the FCC to develop a comprehensive National Broadband Plan that seeks to ensure universal access to broadband capability and establishes benchmarks towards that goal. As part of this mandate, the FCC has conducted a series of public workshops designed to solicit advice on the best ways broadband services can advance a series of national purposes, including public safety, community development, education, job creation and economic development and worker training. The Workforce Alliance was invited to present at the [August 26th workshop on job training](#), along with representatives from the Communications Workers of America, the U.S. Department of Labor, the Sloan Center on Innovative Training and Workforce Development at

Rutgers University, and several private sector online training and employment service providers. TWA expressed support for the expansion of, and access to, online learning as a tool to help low- and middle-skill workers overcome barriers to education and training, but urged the FCC to ensure that access was coupled with the range of complementary services necessary to ensure all workers could persist in, and complete job training programs.



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