



Washington Update

Developments in Federal Workforce Policy

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Workforce Development News

Momentum Grows for “Jobs Bill;” Advocates Must Ensure Training is Part of the Conversation

With the national unemployment rate still in double digits despite a better-than-anticipated [November jobs report](#), congressional leaders and the Obama Administration are signaling their intent to move forward in the coming months with a “jobs bill” focusing on strategies to stimulate job creation. After weeks of speculation, the President on December 8th laid out his proposals to accelerate job growth, which included a new short-term tax credit to encourage hiring by small businesses, incentives for homeowners and businesses to encourage energy efficiency, and additional investments in highway, transit, water and other infrastructure projects. Many of these recommendations were drawn from ideas presented at the White House Forum on Jobs and Economic Growth on December 3rd, which brought together more than [100 representatives](#) of the business, labor, academic and advocacy communities – including Workforce Alliance Executive Director Andy Van Kleunen – to discuss job growth strategies. The White House stressed that the President was not offering these proposals as a “silver bullet” to solve our nation’s high unemployment rate, and that the White House expects other proposals ultimately will be considered as part of on-going discussions.

Congress has also been developing proposals, although at slightly different speeds. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) indicated in a [statement](#) on December 4th that the House version is likely to include investments in transportation and other infrastructure projects, fiscal relief to state and local governments to prevent public sector layoffs, and some form of credit relief for small business owners who are struggling to obtain loans in the current economic climate. It is expected that the House will attempt to offset the projected \$70 billion legislation by reducing the authorized funding levels under the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), the bank bailout bill passed last year. The Senate is unlikely to take up a jobs bill before early next year as it works to finish health care reform legislation, but Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) informed Senate Democrats that the jobs bill is his top priority for early next year.

Democratic leaders have also indicated that Congress will act to extend Unemployment Insurance (UI) and COBRA health insurance subsidies that were included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. However, because the UI and COBRA fixes must be completed before the end of the year, it is likely these components will have to move separately from the jobs bill, perhaps as part of an omnibus package including the remaining unfinished Fiscal Year 2010 appropriations bills.

The Workforce Alliance welcomes efforts to enhance economic security and put America back to work, but as we note in a just-released [white paper](#), job creation strategies will only succeed if there is a robust job training component to a) ensure that workers have the skills – or can quickly obtain the skills – to fill newly created jobs; b) ensure that any jobs created offer the potential for long-term employment and career advancement; and c) ensure that all workers, regardless of

skill level, are able to benefit from job creation investments. Given the urgency to put people back to work immediately, policymakers may assume that job training is less of a priority – the President made little mention of job training in his December 8th speech – so workforce development professionals must weigh in with policymakers now and make sure they understand the vital connection between job training and job creation.

Congress Potentially Looking at WIA Reauthorization for Early 2010

While most attention in Washington is focused on the jobs bill, there have been some behind-the-scenes indications that Congress will also attempt to tackle reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) early next year. The Workforce Alliance has heard through multiple channels that the Administration is pushing for swift reauthorization to help support job creation investments, and key staff at the Departments of Labor and Education have been seeking recommendations from the field for WIA reauthorization through a series of “listening sessions.” Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pension (HELP) staff reached out to committee member offices prior to the Thanksgiving holiday to request WIA priorities, and staff have indicated that they may have draft legislation before the end of the year. The House Education and Labor committee appears to be working on a slightly longer timeframe – it seems unlikely that they will have draft legislation until after the New Year—but conversations appear to be on-going.

A reauthorized WIA is critical to ensure that our nation’s workforce development infrastructure can help sustain recovery efforts and contribute to economic competitiveness and security for all workers and businesses. The Workforce Alliance applauds Congress for these preliminary steps, and we will continue to work with our members in the field to advocate for policy changes that will strengthen the law, including increased funding and access to training services, new capacity for sector partnerships, and better integration between adult education, job training, and higher education to establish seamless career pathways for workers. At the same time, we urge workforce development professionals to contact their policymakers directly and ask them to make WIA reauthorization a personal priority. Because 2010 is an election year, there is a very limited window for action on WIA, and we must make sure that lawmakers are hearing a consistent message about the need for quick reauthorization once the jobs bill is completed.



Budget and Appropriations

Omnibus FY 2010 Appropriations Bill Advancing, Includes Funding for Labor, Education

Congress is moving quickly on a \$447 billion omnibus appropriations package that combines six of the seven remaining spending bills for FY 2010, including the Labor-HHS-Education bill (read the [conference report](#) and a [summary](#) of the Labor-HHS bill). House and Senate conferees

met on December 8th to finalize the legislation, which may see floor action in the House by the end of the week.

As written, the bill would fund WIA formula programs at FY 2009 levels:

- \$861,540,000 for the WIA Adult program;
- \$1,183,840,000 for the WIA Dislocated Worker program; and
- \$924,069,000 for the WIA Youth program.

The bill provides that local boards may transfer up to 30 percent of funds between the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, and extends the allowable contracting provision originally included under the Recovery Act.

Other programs funded under the Employment and Training Administration include:

- \$229,160,000 for the dislocated worker national reserve, with provisions to:
 - permit the Secretary of Labor to provide assistance to states for statewide or local use to address cases of worker dislocations across multiple sectors or across multiple local areas; and
 - allow funds to be used for demonstration projects that provide assistance to new entrants in the workforce and incumbent workers.
- \$93,450,000 for Pilots, Demonstrations, and Research, of which \$30 million shall be for transitional jobs activities.
- \$108,493,000 for ex-offender activities, of which \$15 million shall be for competitive grants to provide transitional jobs activities for ex-offenders.
- \$40 million for programs to prepare workers for careers in energy efficiency and renewable energy careers, as described in the Green Jobs Act of 2007.
- \$125 million for a new Career Pathways Innovation Fund, which replaces the Community-Based Job Training grant program and provides competitive grants to community colleges and partnerships with local adult education providers to prepare workers for careers in high-demand and emerging industries. Of this total, \$65 million is for activities to prepare workers for careers in the health care sector.
- \$825,425,000 for the Senior Community Service Employment Program, an increase of more than \$250 million over FY 2009.
- \$703,576,000 for state Employment Services grants.

In addition to these programs, the bill provides \$628 million for state adult education grants, an increase of \$74 million over FY 2009, and approximately \$17.5 billion for Pell Grants, which will support a maximum Pell award of \$5,500.

Federal spending for these programs is currently being provided under a continuing resolution (CR), which will expire December 18th, and while the House may be able to vote on the bill by the end of the week, it is unclear how quickly the Senate will move to take up the bill, meaning another short-term CR may be required. The Workforce Alliance will continue to provide updates to the field on the appropriations process as the process unfolds.



Department of Labor

Department of Labor Releases \$55 Million in Green Jobs Competitive Grants

On November 18th, the Department of Labor (DOL) [announced](#) nearly \$55 million in grant awards to states and training providers to help individuals find and train for green job opportunities. The two grant programs covered by the announcement – the State Labor Market Information Improvement grant program and Green Capacity Building grants – are part of a larger \$500 million initiative authorized under the Recovery Act. Awards under the remaining three grant programs, which will provide approximately \$450 million for job training programs through strategic partnerships led by state and local workforce boards, labor-management partnerships, and community-based organizations, are expected to be announced in the next few months.

Almost \$49 million in State Labor Market Information Improvement grants were awarded to 23 states, six multistate consortiums, and Puerto Rico to collect, analyze, and disseminate labor market information and to enhance the labor exchange infrastructure for careers in the energy efficiency and renewable energy industries. Grants ranged from around \$760,000 to \$4 million.

A total of \$5.8 million in Green Capacity Building grants were awarded to 62 current DOL grantees to expand organizational capacity to provide training for entry-level positions leading to career pathways in the energy efficiency and renewable energy industries. The grants were targeted at programs serving workers impacted by national energy and environmental policy, veterans, unemployed individuals, and other underserved populations.

The Workforce Alliance will continue to update the field on federal grant opportunities and awards that impact education and job training. To view TWA's summary of the green jobs grant programs under the Recovery Act, please click [here](#).



**Washington Update Contributor:
Kermit Kaleba**

For more information, please contact:

Kermit Kaleba
Senior Policy Analyst
The Workforce Alliance
1730 Rhode Island Avenue NW, Suite 712
Washington, DC 20036
kermitk@workforcealliance.org
202.223.8991 ext. 103