



FEBRUARY 26, 2007

RECOMMENDATIONS ON REAUTHORIZATION OF WIA
FROM THE LOCAL WORKFORCE COALITION:

The National Association of Counties (NACo)
The National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB)
The United States Conference of Mayors (USCM)
The National Workforce Association (NWA)
USA Works!

The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy
Chairman
HELP Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael Enzi
Ranking Republican
HELP Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators:

The Local Workforce Coalition, comprised of the National Association of Counties, the National Association of Workforce Boards, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the National Workforce Association, and USA WORKS! -- the principal organizations representing local officials and business leaders responsible for the design and delivery of the U.S. workforce investment system, commend you for your leadership in development and passage of S. 1021, the Workforce Investment Act Amendments of 2005" last Congress. While S. 1021 was not enacted, we strongly urge you to build upon the principle reforms included in that legislation, and to move quickly this year with a Senate reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act.

Enactment of WIA reauthorization legislation continues to be extremely important at this pivotal time in our nation's economy. U.S. competitiveness, long-term economic security, and ultimately our American way of life depend in large part on a highly skilled and flexible workforce. Future U.S. prosperity will depend upon educating all Americans to much higher and different standards. We must ensure that all low wage and structurally unemployed workers have the opportunity to acquire new high-value skills; receive the support they need while upgrading skills and changing careers; and have access to high quality assistance for finding good jobs that will enable them to support their families. To support future economic growth, we must find ways to bring businesses, workers, researchers, economic developers,

entrepreneurs, K-16 and other education and training institutions, and governments together, at the local/regional level, to identify and develop their strengths and capacity for innovation.

Members of the Local Coalition understand first hand what needs to be done. The best local boards around the country are already leading efforts in their communities, convening partners, brokering services, identifying and following through on necessary actions to develop their local/regional knowledge-based, innovation economies.

As you prepare for consideration of WIA reauthorization this year, we would like to provide you with the attached recommendations from the Local Coalition – which focus on the following issues of priority:

- Governance and Local Area Designation – a bill that ensures a continued strong, locally-based business-led workforce investment system; ensures the appointment of local boards by local elected officials; protects the designation of high-performing workforce areas; maintains but does not expand current WIA waiver authority (beyond the expedited waiver authority contained in S. 1021); and provides incentives/assistance to local areas to work regionally (around true labor market or economic development areas), to address the comprehensive education, workforce, economic and competitiveness needs of their regions.
- Local Boards – a bill that clarifies the essential, pivotal role that local boards are intended to play as conveners of key stakeholders for development and alignment of local/regional workforce and economic strategies; and as brokers of training and related services, resulting in a highly skilled workforce.
- Business Services, Alignment with Economic Development, Encouragement for Innovation – a bill that encourages innovation and development of knowledge-based economies through: alignment of workforce and economic development, adult and postsecondary education; implementation of innovative services and strategies for serving employers that ensure WIA system relevance for business; and encouragement for the leveraging and flexible use of private sector resources for meeting these goals.
- Expenditures and Administrative Cost Limits – a bill that fairly holds States and local areas accountable for system expenditures based upon accrued expenditures (in future program years); and provides a fair, function-based definition of administrative costs, similar to that used by business, allowing for efficient system management.
- One-Stop Infrastructure Funding– a bill that adequately funds the One-Stop infrastructure, allowing for comprehensive service delivery and increased resources for training.
- Training – a bill that continues to authorize training for low wage workers for jobs that provide self-sufficiency; simplifies training reporting requirements; provides for local input on certification of training providers; and strongly encourages expanded access to training, and gives credit for the leveraging of resources, other than WIA, for training.
- Youth – a bill that protects the \$1 billion currently provided for Youth formula funding for both in-school and out-of-school youth ages 14-21; provides separate authority and funding for national programs, including YouthBuild; and allows for continued, innovative services for in-school youth.
- Performance Standards – a bill that maintains the current measures of customer satisfaction and skills attainment for adults (important for meeting employers’ skill needs); that

emphasizes effectiveness or return on investment, and that uses a regression model to encourage services for the hardest to serve.

The Local Coalition strongly supports enactment of WIA reauthorization this year. Any fundamental changes to the WIA system, such as changes in local area designation; the definition of administrative costs; or system performance measures, should be made by Congress, as part of the WIA reauthorization process. Therefore we urge you to move legislation early this session to avoid further attempts to make fundamental changes in the structure of the workforce system through the regulatory process. We thank you for your hard work and dedication to these issues and look forward to continuing to work with you on this vital legislation.

National Association of Counties
(Daria Daniel, 202-942-4212)

National Association of Workforce Boards
(Mark Schultz, 703-778-7900)

U.S. Conference of Mayors
(Kathy Amoroso, 202-293-7330)

National Workforce Association
USA Works!
(David Bradley, 202-842-4723)

Sincerely,

