

For Immediate Release:
Thursday, July 16, 2009

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WEBB INTRODUCES BILL TO STRENGTHEN ADULT EDUCATION, WORKFORCE

WASHINGTON – Senator Jim Webb (D-VA) today introduced the “Adult Education and Economic Growth (AEEG) Act of 2009,” which will reform and increase investment in job training, adult education and other programs needed to build a 21st century workforce.

According to the National Commission on Adult Literacy, 80-90 million U.S. adults today—about half of the adult workforce—do not have the basic education and communications skills required to obtain jobs that pay a family-sustaining wage. However, federal funding for adult education has declined in real terms since 2002, and the nation’s primary federal resource for adult education, job training and employment services—the Workforce Investment Act—has not been reauthorized for over ten years.

“The American workplace has seen many changes over the past ten years, and the need for well-trained and highly skilled workers has increased dramatically. At the same time, our adult education system has not kept pace with this changing workforce,” said Webb. “One of the biggest impacts we can have on our economic future is to ensure that as many workers as possible are able to improve the skills and credentials needed to compete in our global economy.”

“We are proposing a two-pronged approach to strengthen the nation’s workforce. First, we want to build ‘on ramps’ for American workers who need new skills and a better education in order to improve their lives. Just as importantly, we want to protect and reward employers for helping them, by offering tax credits to businesses that invest in their employees,” said Webb.

“Modest funding will invigorate state and local adult education programs to better align with workplace needs,” continued Webb. “This investment will have an affirmative ripple effect on our communities. And, it advances my longstanding goal of promoting basic economic fairness in our society.”

Specifically, the Adult Education and Economic Growth Act of 2009 makes significant changes to adult education and training by:

- Encouraging employers to invest in lower skilled working adults by providing a tax credit for employers who invest in their employee's education;
- Increasing funding for adult education to provide additional support for state and local authorities to ensure collaboration between adult education and workforce needs;
- Improving access to correctional education programs to channel former offenders into productive endeavors and reduce recidivism; and
- Expanding access to adult education services through the use of technology.

“As a matter of great economic urgency, we need to transform the current array of adult education and workforce skills programs into a coherent, integrated system that meets 21st century needs,” said Gail Spangenberg, Manager, National Commission on Adult Literacy. “The National Commission on Adult Literacy applauds the future-thinking Adult Education and Economic Growth Act and Senator Webb’s leadership for recognizing these imperatives.”

In the House of Representatives, Congressmen Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) and Ruben Hinojosa (D-TX) today introduced companion legislation to Webb’s legislation. Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) serves as an original cosponsor in the Senate.

To review summary of The Adult Education and Economic Growth (AEEG) Act of 2009, visit:

<http://www.webb.senate.gov/pdf/SmmyAdEd.pdf>

Video and audio of Senator Webb’s floor speech also available upon request.

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