



Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy  
1221 Avenue of the Americas - 44<sup>th</sup> Floor New York, NY 10020

June 24, 2011

The Honorable Michael Enzi  
835 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Johnny Isakson  
120 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
731 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20501

The Honorable Patti Murray  
173 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Murray, Enzi, Harkin, and Isakson:

This letter comes to you on behalf of CAAL and members of the National Commission on Adult Literacy. We want to thank you for your leadership in reauthorizing the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and bringing about needed improvements in adult education and workforce development.

The Commission's report, *Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce (2008)*, noted that other nations are fast outstripping America in boosting the educational levels of their young and their working-age adults, endangering our global competitiveness. This is alarming for the future of our economy because educational levels relate to employment levels and income.

Nearly half of U.S. workers aged 18-64 either have no high school diploma, or a high school diploma but no college, and/or low English and basic skills proficiency. If we fail to educate new workers from these adult ranks, large numbers of them will become a drain on the economy rather than a positive economic force. As the Commission's report makes clear, there will be large fiscal and social gains from providing the needed services, and they will more than offset the human resource investments made now.

As your leadership has acknowledged, we must build a strong adult education system if we are to overcome unemployment, achieve national economic growth, compete effectively in the global economy, and ensure that Americans reach and succeed in college and job training programs so they will qualify for current and emerging jobs.

We are so pleased that you recognize that millions of out-of-school adults rely on the Adult Education system, and that this system with its WIA-envisioned improvements is essential if the economy is to prosper in the 21st century and if Americans are to reach their full potential. Your WIA bill takes a major step in redefining the basics by providing a framework that upgrades traditional skills services and planning for basic reading, writing, math and numeracy, and oral communication. Equally important, it also expands the adult education and workforce development system to teach skills such as communication, critical thinking, research capabilities, problem solving, and working in teams – all imperative if adult education is to result in gaining and keeping a job.

Your WIA bill recognizes that the status quo is not an option. We must do very much better in providing instructional services through workforce development programs, community-based organizations, school districts, the workplace, community colleges, and other venues.

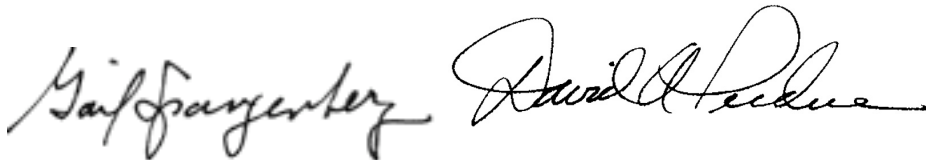
The bill is extremely well conceived and informed. It provides solid policy and funding support for both integrated and sequential programs; recognizes the important role of the private sector, educators, adult education service providers, and other stakeholders; and provides new, firm guidelines to ensure comprehensive planning that will result in well-directed and effective program services and make the best use of available resources. It also offers employers incentives to provide basic skills services for incumbent workers, including workplace programs. We are extremely pleased by the bill's strong assessment and accountability measures.

We also applaud your recognition of the role that technology must play in educating our adult workforce, for without substantially more use of technology and distance learning, the nation cannot serve substantially more learners in a cost-effective way.

We recognize that much can be accomplished through system integration and alignment and through the greater use of technology. But it is also true that investment in the Adult Education system, and the workforce system in general, has declined in real terms in recent years. We simply must invest more if we are to reach the almost 90 million Americans who have at least one education barrier blocking their readiness for admission to and success in college and jobs.

We look forward to working with you to achieve the passage and enactment of your bill and to secure the funds necessary to reach those working Americans who will benefit from Adult Education and workforce skills upgrading.

Sincerely,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is 'Gail Spangenberg' and the signature on the right is 'David Perdue'. Both are written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gail Spangenberg  
President, CAAL  
Manager & Member,  
National Commission  
on Adult Literacy

David Perdue  
International Businessman  
Former Chair, National Commission  
on Adult Literacy  
Former CEO, Dollar General Corporation

Copies to: Hon. Lamar Alexander, Michael F. Bennet, Jeff Bingaman, Richard Blumenthal, Richard Burr, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Al Franken, Kay Hagan, Orrin G. Hatch, Mark Kirk, John McCain, Jeff Merkley, Barbara Mikulski, Lisa Murkowski, Rand Paul, Pat Roberts, Bernard Sanders, and Sheldon Whitehouse



## **Members of National Commission on Adult Literacy**

**David Perdue**, former Chairman & CEO, Dollar General Corporation (Commission Chairman); international businessman

**Morton Bahr**, President Emeritus, Communications Workers of America

**Hon. Gerald Baliles**, Director, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia; former Governor of Virginia

**David Beré**, former President and Chief Operating Officer, Dollar General Corporation

**Robert Bickerton**, Sr. Associate Commissioner of Education for the Commonwealth of MA

**Marion Crain**, Director, Center on Poverty, Work, and Opportunity, University of North Carolina

**John Comings**, Director, National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University

**Sharon Darling**, President and Founder, National Center for Family Literacy

**Samuel Halperin**, Senior Fellow and Founder, American Youth Policy Forum

**Paul Harrington**, President and CEO, Reebok International (currently president and CEO, Eastern-Bell Sports)

**George Kessinger**, President and CEO, Goodwill Industries International, Inc.

**Cheryl D. King** (Study Director), former Deputy Secretary and Commissioner of Adult Education and Workforce Development in Kentucky; currently President of Kentucky Wesleyan College

**Bridget Lamont**, Vice Chair, U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science; past Chair and current member, Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board

**Hon. Ray Marshall**, Rapoport Centennial Chair in Economics and Public Affairs, University of Texas; former U.S. Secretary of Labor

**Gail Mellow**, President, LaGuardia Community College

**Owen Modeland**, President, Correctional Education Association; Supt of Schools, Oklahoma Department of Corrections

**Mark Musick**, James Quillen Chair, East Tennessee State University; President Emeritus, Southern Regional Education Board (SREB); chaired Board of National Assessment of Educational Progress under three presidents

**Karen Narasaki**, President, Asian American Justice Center; Vice Chair, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights; Vice President of Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform

**Juan Olivarez**, President, Grand Rapids Community College; member, Board of National Institute for Literacy

**Camille Preus**, Commissioner, Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development; recent President, National Council on State Directors of Community Colleges; Chair-elect of Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education

**Hon. Tom Sawyer**, Ohio State Senator; former member U.S. House of Representatives. Author, National Literacy Act of 1991

**Hon. George Staples**, Director General of U.S. Foreign Service and Assistant Secretary for Human Resources, U.S. Department of State (retired July 2007); former U.S. Ambassador to many countries

**Gail Spangenberg** (Commission Manager), President, Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy; former operating head, Business Council for Effective Literacy

**Andrew Sum**, Professor of Labor Economics, Director of Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University

**Robert Wedgeworth**, Past President & CEO, Proliteracy Worldwide (retired June 2007); former President, American Library Association

**William White**, President and Chairman, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation