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Praise for Bipartisan, Bicameral Bill to Improve America's Workforce Development System

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Since a bipartisan, bicameral group of legislators announced a deal to improve the nation's workforce development system through the [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\)](#), a broad array of labor, business, and workforce development leaders, as well as governors and mayors from around the country, has expressed support for the proposal.

Read a summary of the bill [here](#). Excerpts from letters of support sent to the bipartisan, bicameral group are immediately below, and a full list of supporters is included at the bottom of this release.

“The nation's governors applaud the introduction in Congress of the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act*. Job creation, job retention and business expansion are top priorities for governors. The National Governors Association (NGA) has long called on Congress to reauthorize the existing *Workforce Investment Act* (WIA) and restore the 15 percent WIA set-aside for governors to create jobs, spur economic growth, grow family incomes and get people back to work... This legislation will help get Americans back to work, upgrade workers' skills and create jobs. The nation's governors urge the House and Senate to pass WIOA as soon as possible.”

--[National Governors Association](#)

“[T]hank you for your bi-partisan work to renew and improve the nation's workforce system... As economic stewards of cities, mayors know that helping employers secure the highly-skilled workforce they need is not a partisan issue, and we greatly appreciate your bi-partisan and bi-cameral cooperation to move this critical

legislation forward. Federal workforce and adult education programs help millions of Americans find jobs, prepare for work and build the skills required for emerging employment opportunities, and they are of paramount importance as we work to secure the nation's economic future.”

--[U.S. Conference of Mayors](#)

“To increase U.S. competitiveness, we must educate, train, attract, and invest in employees who are able to compete and grow in the 21st century. WIOA is a bipartisan compromise...and it would provide a reasonable path towards a long- overdue reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act...The Chamber supports this legislation and urges passage, while looking forward to continued work with Congress and the Administration on ways to innovate and modernize workforce development to achieve a truly employer-centric system that drives economic growth, competitiveness, and opportunity. Ultimately, the “Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act” represents an important step in improving program efficacy and administration of the workforce training system, which is good for workers, employers, and the economy.”

--[U.S. Chamber of Commerce](#)

“This legislation will improve our nation's workforce development system and help countless Americans prepare for new jobs...Providing greater access to training, education and employment services remains a top priority of the AFL- CIO and its affiliates. We believe that to improve the nation's workforce development system we must focus on providing sufficient skill training to participants, rather than directing individuals into low-wage, low skill jobs that have little prospect of career advancement. WIOA provides important new tools to take us in this direction...The success of our nation's employment and training system is a key factor in whether jobless workers can obtain gainful employment and high skill jobs. Enactment of the ‘Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act’ will help us achieve these goals.”

--[AFL-CIO](#)

“The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act is a bipartisan effort to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act in ways that seek to address job training needs in our current economy. By streamlining programs to better serve those seeking help, allowing flexibility to support real-world education, and better coordination with businesses to allow for stronger understanding of actual workforce needs, this bill moves training forward into the modern economy.”

--[National Retail Federation](#)

“[This] legislation that will improve the lives of millions of people by offering workers the necessary training, education and employment services that will enable them to access quality jobs and gain a more secure foothold in the labor market. A modern and accountable workforce development system, with a seat at the table for all stakeholders, is essential to meet the needs of the rapidly changing 21st century economy...[This bill] modernizes the workforce development system, by focusing on building career pathways out of poverty in high growth, high demand and emerging sectors and industries. This will help to provide economic security not only for individual workers and their families, but will also strengthen the economy in local communities, as well as result in stronger regional, state, and national economies.”

--[Service Employees International Union](#)

“Among the key improvements in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act are Changes to the Training and Employment Services that will increase the ability for incumbent workers and companies to use on-the-job training. The changes will enhance the competitiveness of workers and companies in the technology sector where skills are the key to success. Specifically, the bill will support on-the-job, incumbent worker, and customized training, pay-for-performance contracts, sector and pathway strategies, and smaller, more nimble state and local workforce development boards...IBM supports the Bipartisan, Bicameral Agreement and urges its passage by the House and Senate.”

--[IBM](#)

“We need immediate and long-term solutions to replenish the skilled workforce pipeline and this legislation takes significant steps towards those solutions... Industry-recognized credentials are the primary workforce development priority for the NAM and we are glad to see the legislation embraces that mission, both by working to prioritize funding for industry-recognized credentials, but also that attainment of post-secondary credentials will improve the quality and quantity of workers available in the manufacturing workforce.”

--[National Association of Manufacturers](#)

“WIOA recognizes that the needs of disadvantaged youth are different from adult populations, and therefore retains a separate funding stream to support employment, training, education and comprehensive services to prepare youth and young adults for success in the 21st century labor market. Reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act offers an opportunity to address the challenges facing our emerging workforce, to make improvements to the workforce development system, and to intentionally connect youth with secondary and postsecondary education systems. The provisions in this bill represent strong action to streamline and improve workforce investment system programs, and to connect youth to multiple career pathways to success.”

--[National Youth Employment Coalition](#)

“On behalf of Easter Seals’ national affiliate network and individuals with disabilities and other jobseekers we work with to develop new skills and find jobs, I want to commend you on the release of the bipartisan Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. This bill represents a significant advancement for jobseekers with disabilities by providing them with early access to employment services and supports to help them find jobs in their communities... The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act will help address the employment challenges facing people with disabilities... Thank you again for your leadership in updating our nation’s workforce system and in increasing employment opportunities and outcomes for people with disabilities.”

--[Easter Seals](#)

“Community colleges play a leading role in providing workers with the skills they need in the 21st century economy at all stages in their careers and educational development. We are hopeful that the improvements made to the workforce development system in WIOA will enhance the partnership between our colleges and the workforce system... We applaud the efforts you have led to craft a bicameral, bipartisan bill that will better align the federal workforce system and ultimately better serve workers seeking new or improved employment opportunities.”

--[American Association of Community Colleges/Association of Community College Trustees](#)

“This bill extends the ladder of opportunity to more workers—especially young people, the disabled, the long-term unemployed and those barely getting by on low-wage jobs—by providing the skills and training needed to compete for 21st-century jobs. Our public schools need to be grounded in ensuring kids can build relationships, think critically, problem solve and show persistence, but that can't end once they leave the classroom. Programs like those in this bill help continue that path forward; bring together government, employers and workers; and help create the good jobs our communities and our families so desperately need.”

--[American Federation of Teachers](#)

“[T]hank you for your bipartisan and bicameral leadership on this issue. The WIOA will help employees and employers alike, by streamlining and enhancing our workforce development system and better orienting training toward the skills required in the current job market... We support this legislation’s focus on streamlining workforce training programs and providing workers more effective job training services.”

--[National Restaurant Association](#)

“[T]hank you for crafting a bipartisan, bicameral agreement to reauthorize programs supporting our nation’s workforce development system via the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act*... the bill maintains the basic structure of the *Workforce Investment Act* (WIA); includes labor representation on workforce boards; provides work-based learning opportunities for young people and more services for low-income, low-skill workers; and

enhances the focus on successful transitions to post-secondary opportunities for adult basic education students...this long overdue legislation is a step forward in ensuring that young people are better prepared to enter the workforce, and that adult workers have the skills they need to meet the workforce demands of a changing economy.”

--[National Education Association](#)

“The legislation would modernize and improve existing federal workforce development programs, help workers attain skills for 21st century jobs, and foster the modern workforce critical for American businesses to remain competitive...At a time of sustained high and long-term unemployment in many communities, the WIOA would help workers gain skills and find jobs, and help employers hire the workers they need to meet the challenges of the economy in the 21st century.”

--[National Association of State Workforce Agencies](#)

“The newly created Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act is an important step toward better aligning federal workforce programs. We believe that this is a strong effort to improve the country's chances of addressing the skills gap and building a workforce that can compete and succeed in a global economy. The legislation takes a positive step by recognizing that real-world training is a catalyst to ensuring that individuals have the necessary skills to take advantage of the jobs that exist today and in the future.”

--[Siemens Corporation](#)

“In an encouraging display of bipartisan unity, the U.S. Congress has reached a long-sought bipartisan agreement to overhaul the nation’s main law overseeing federal job-training programs, aiming to strengthen services and increase the ability for millions of underserved adults to find work and launch family-supporting careers. The proposed reauthorization of the \$3 billion *Workforce Investment Act* emphasizes approaches with demonstrated success helping out-of school youth, low-skilled adults, dislocated workers, English language learners, people with disabilities, and others who are unemployed or stuck in low-paying jobs.”

--[Jobs for the Future](#)

“The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is a skillful balance between the views of the Senate and House of Representatives on the direction of federal workforce policy...it has the potential to improve services for both workers and employers by strengthening accountability, aligning local workforce services with local labor markets and in-demand industries, creating closer coordination between the workforce and education systems, promoting services along career pathways and through industry or sector partnerships and providing for workforce staff training and professional development...It is an impressive accomplishment and should be considered and passed by the Senate and House of Representatives as soon as possible.”

--[American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees](#)

“Senators Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Lamar Alexander (R-TN), and Representatives John Kline (R-MN) and George Miller (D-CA) should be commended for putting forth several strong ideas about how to improve the effectiveness of the federal workforce system....[W]e are pleased to see a bipartisan, bicameral group come together to improve the effectiveness of the nation’s multi-layered workforce development programs. The bipartisan negotiations around the *Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act* are the first step in this effort. We urge both chambers to quickly move this legislation and look forward to working with Congress to better align all of the federal programs with the needs of states, employers and the unemployed.”

--[Bipartisan Policy Center’s Governors Council](#)

“On behalf of the thousands of young people served by the YouthBuild system each year, we would like to thank you for your dedicated work on the reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. We applaud your commitment to producing a bipartisan, bicameral bill that will improve the nation’s workforce development system for years to come...We thank you for your hard work and dedication to creating a

workforce system that will include the most disadvantaged young people seeking a well-designed opportunity to become productive, contributing adults well prepared for important jobs in our society.”

--[YouthBuild USA](#)

“America’s business leaders commend the Senate and House for working together to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) as a tangible commitment to improve the country’s chances of addressing the skills gap and building a workforce that can compete and succeed in the global economy. This legislation takes a positive step by recognizing that real-world training is the catalyst to ensuring that individuals have the necessary skills to take advantage of the jobs that exist today and in the future. We further hope that the bipartisan, bicameral development of this bill will be a model for a renewed spirit of collaboration in Washington.”

--[Business Roundtable](#)

“WIA is long overdue for reauthorization, as it expired in 2003. A strong and modernized workforce system will increase investments in quality services, resources and training, and help ensure that states and localities can continue to respond to the needs of unemployed and underemployed Americans. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act provides the needed framework for a modernized workforce development system... We are pleased that the bill will enhance flexibility at the local level so that communities can better address their workforce challenges... The legislation will ensure that America’s workers can develop the skills needed for meaningful employment by having access to effective job training and placement services and that employers’ have a skilled workforce to maintain and increase their competitive edge.”

--[National Association of Counties](#)

“This bipartisan, bicameral bill makes great strides in moving the workforce training system into the 2014 economy. We are very pleased with the bill’s emphasis on career pathways and training programs leading to recognized credentials. In today’s economy, individuals must be able to easily promote their skills to employers across an industry, and credentials provide essential signaling power in the job market, as well as connections to higher levels of education... Thank you for the years of work you have spent on revamping the workforce system for today’s workers and the economy.”

--[Association for Career and Technical Education](#)

“[This bill] is the nation's foundational legislation for responding to the changing skill needs of the U.S. labor market has long been due for re-authorization. NAWB is proud to support the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) legislation and urges Congress to pass and for the President to sign WIOA so that local business-led workforce investment boards (WIBs) can continue to provide the guidance, support, and coordination to the nation's businesses and workforce... We applaud this bicameral, bipartisan approach... We believe that WIOA can help assure that U.S. companies will remain competitive and grow jobs that our domestic workforce has the guidance and pathways needed to obtain required skills, and that our communities have the resources to remain strong.”

--[National Association of Workforce Boards](#)

“[This] is the product of serious and substantive discussions and negotiations with the blind and other Americans with disabilities... [I]t focuses the rehabilitation system on providing quality rehabilitation services that empower people with all disabilities to obtain competitive integrated employment... will help reduce the number of disabled youth being tracked into sheltered subminimum wage employment... [and] represents a significant improvement in policies designed to create and enhance employment opportunities for American workers with disabilities. We thank each of you for your hard work in crafting this important bill.”

--[National Federation of the Blind](#)

“As a bipartisan, bicameral agreement, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act is a significant achievement. We know that it reflects considerable time and effort on your part and appreciate the persistence

of your committees in seeking common ground to produce legislation that will benefit thousands of Americans, including many veterans and people with disabilities.”

--[Paralyzed Veterans of America](#)

“[This bill] will provide much needed modernization and streamlining of the nation’s workforce system and it will help every American who is out of work receive the training they need and the support they require to obtain employment...The National League of Cities has long supported the Workforce Investment Act and its predecessors. NLC believes that workforce development programs targeting those in need and providing them with the skills and access to in-demand jobs are necessary components of a successful workforce development strategy. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act would contribute substantially to the development of a national workforce development strategy that can train and employ disadvantaged and dislocated workers and youth.”

--[National League of Cities](#)

“[This bill] will improve employment opportunities and economic prospects for employment for all Americans, including those with disabilities...AUCD is especially pleased with the strong emphasis on providing more training and other supports and services for youth with disabilities transitioning from school to work or postsecondary education. The bill raises expectations for youth with disabilities and assists states to provide them with the supports they need to ensure success...This compromise bill is a step in the right direction and should be supported. Thank you for your strong bi-partisan work on this effort.”

--[Association of University Centers on Disabilities](#)

“This legislation will strengthen our nation’s workforce development system and increase employment opportunities by creating a more streamlined approach that focuses on businesses’ hiring and training needs... WIOA is an important step in ensuring our workforce development system is capable of providing workers with the skills they need, and providing our nation with a workforce that can respond to economic demand. Specifically, the legislation will ensure that small businesses, which create more than 65 percent of all new jobs in America, have the opportunity to participate in shaping the development of training programs targeted toward available career opportunities. By serving their communities through local workforce investment boards, business leaders can become directly involved in shaping the development of job training programs and serve as an authority on training, skills and job opportunities in their communities...The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act is an important step in bringing much needed reform to our country’s workforce training system.”

--[Associated Builders and Contractors](#)

“Goodwill supports the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act’s (WIOA) approach. It preserves core job training programs in order to build upon their strengths while making needed improvements. It aims to enhance program alignment and collaboration; establishes common performance measures for adults across core programs; and increases employment opportunities for youth with disabilities. These and other improvements are an important step in the right direction.”

--[Goodwill Industries](#)

“[T]hank you for your bipartisan leadership in introducing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014. NADO believes this legislation is an important, critical step toward strengthening and modernizing the nation’s workforce investment system. We look forward to working with you to advance this legislation that ensures that all workers and businesses have access to the training and skills they need to compete in today’s global economy...we appreciate your ongoing bipartisan commitment to improving and strengthening the nation’s workforce investment system that enhances regional and economic innovation at the local level.”

--[National Association of Development Organizations](#)

The *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* would reauthorize, modernize, and improve existing federal

workforce development programs, help workers attain skills for 21st-century jobs, and foster the modern workforce that evolving American businesses rely on to compete.

WIOA represents a compromise between the SKILLS Act (H.R. 803), which passed the House of Representatives in March of 2013 with bipartisan support, and the *Workforce Investment Act of 2013* (S. 1356), which passed the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee with [a bipartisan vote of 18-3 in July of 2013](#).

Leading the effort to reach this deal were Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee; Rep. John Kline (R-MN), Chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee; Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Ranking Member of the Senate HELP Committee; Rep. George Miller (D-CA), Ranking Member of the House Education and the Workforce Committee; Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA), Chair of the Budget Committee; Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), Chair of the House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training; Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-GA), Ranking Member of the HELP Subcommittee on Employment; and Rep. Rubén E. Hinojosa (D-TX), Ranking Member of the House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training.

The array of labor, business, and workforce development leaders, as well as governors and mayors voicing support for the bipartisan, bicameral *WIOA* include: the American Association of Community Colleges; AFL-CIO; American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees; American Federation of Teachers; American Library Association; The Arc; Associated Builders and Contractors; Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs; Associated General Contractors of America; Association for Advancing Automation; Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs; Association for Career and Technical Education; Association of Community College Trustees; Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living; Association of University Centers on Disabilities; Bipartisan Policy Center's Governors Council; Business Roundtable; Center for Law and Social Policy; Commercial Vehicle Training Association; Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities; Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy; Easter Seals; Goodwill Industries; IBM; International Economic Development Council; International Union of Painters and Allied Trades; Jobs for the Future; National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities; National Association of Counties; National Association of Development Organizations; National Association of Manufacturers; National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education Consortium; National Association of State Workforce Agencies; National Association of Workforce Boards; National Association of Workforce Development Professionals; National Council on Independent Living; National Council of State Directors of Adult Education; National Education Association; National Federation of the Blind; National Governors Association; National League of Cities; National Restaurant Association; National Retail Federation; National Skills Coalition; National Youth Employment Coalition; North America's Building Trades Union; Opportunity America; Paralyzed Veterans of America; Service Employees International Union; Siemens Corporation; U.S. Chamber of Commerce; U.S. Conference of Mayors; and YouthBuild USA.

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