

## Introduction

The Texas Workforce Investment Council's *Federal Legislative Update* is published on a quarterly basis and informs stakeholders about developments in federal legislation that may impact workforce policy for Texas.

## Recent Highlights from Congress

### Education

The House passed the Strengthening Transparency in Higher Education Act (HR 3178) to help increase access to more comprehensive information and provide clarity for students and families. The legislation will require the U.S. Department of Education to publish a college dashboard to help students and families make informed decisions about their education options by:

- Ensuring college information and data is streamlined and easily accessible to students;
- Delivering higher education data that is reflective of all college students; and
- Improving coordination between federal agencies to avoid duplication.

### Perkins Act

The House passed House Resolution (HR) 5587, the reauthorization of the Perkins Act, now called the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act. The bill makes a number of policy changes intended to reinforce alignment between Perkins-funded career and technical education programs and other education and training programs, as well as activities funded under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Since 1984, the Perkins Act has provided federal support to state and local career and technical education programs. These programs offer students the opportunity to gain the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to enter the workforce. The legislation passed by the House will:

- Provide states with more flexibility to use federal resources in response to changing education and economic needs;
- Ensure career and technical education prepares all students for success in high-skill, high-wage occupations and careers in nontraditional fields;
- Improve alignment with in-demand jobs by supporting innovative learning opportunities, developing partnerships, and encouraging stronger engagement with employers;
- Enhance career and technical education through increased focus on employability skills, work-based learning opportunities, and credentialing; and
- Empower states and local areas to develop plans that improve the quality of career and technical education that will work for their unique needs.



U.S. House of Representatives

### Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

The Senate introduced The Enhancing and Modernizing Pathways to Opportunity through Work, Education and Responsibility Act. This legislation will reauthorize the Temporary Assistance with Needy Families (TANF) program for fiscal year 2017 through fiscal year 2021. The bill:

- Includes employment entry, retention, and advancement as one of the purposes of the TANF program;
- Eliminates the two-parent work participation rate;
- Eliminates the financial penalty for a state failing to reach target work participation rates;
- Eliminates limits on non-core work activities, including job skills training or education directly related to employment; and
- Redefines vocational education training to include postsecondary, vocational, or career and technical education and extends the limit on participation in such activities from 12 to 36 months.

### Other Workforce-Related Legislation

The following bills were recently introduced and will continue to be monitored throughout the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress:

**HR 5635 – The Leveraging Effective Apprenticeships to Rebuild National Skills Act.** This is a comprehensive reform bill for the federal apprenticeship registration system. It would authorize subsidies to employers to cover the costs of developing apprenticeships and grants to support preapprenticeship programs. The bill substantially mirrors the Effective Apprenticeships Rebuild National Skills Act.

**HR 5663 – The Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Communication and Creativity for Careers Act.** This bill would amend the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act to allow and emphasize experiential, work-based, and project-based learning activities.

**HR 5848 – The Apprenticeship Improvement Act.** The bill would amend WIOA to allow participants in pre-apprenticeship programs to be provided on-the-job training. WIOA's definitions specify that apprentices can be supported through one-the-job training contracts.

**HR 5849 – The New Jobs Training Act.** The bill would authorize a grant program for employers that partner with community colleges to fill new jobs.

**S 3093 – The Equity in Career and Technical Education Act.** The bill would require states to report on and address equity gaps in career and technical education program participation and outcomes by gender, race, and each of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education program's special populations. States would be allowed to set aside \$100,000 from their annual allotments to provide technical assistance and professional development to local funding recipients to address program equity.

**S 3344 – The Innovation for Tomorrow’s Workforce Act.** The bill is aimed at improving student outcomes by developing, implementing, and scaling up program models. Projects serving predominantly low-income students would be given priority. Recipients would be required to use a pay-for-success funding model. The bill would also authorize Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act local and state leadership funding to be used for work-based learning opportunities, including employer-led training resulting in a recognized credential and apprenticeships.

**S 3349 – The Career and Technical Education Adult Learners Act.** The bill would authorize integrated adult and technical education under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, authority similar to that under Title II of WIOA. The bill would also require local Perkins plans to describe how funding will be used to support work experiences for students and how programs will engage in industry and sector partnerships.

**HR 2551 – The Veterans Entry to Apprenticeship Act.** The bill would allow the use of veterans’ education benefits as an income support for those attending pre-apprenticeship programs by treating the programs as registered apprenticeships.

**HR 5380 – The REVAMP with Community Colleges Act of 2016.** The bill would authorize a \$250 million program in fiscal year 2017 to fund competitive Department of Labor grants that help community colleges develop programs that train veterans for locally in-demand jobs.

## Of Note

President Obama signed WIOA into law on July 22, 2014. This landmark legislation is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, and training in order to achieve success in the workforce. The U.S. Departments of Labor and Education released the final rules of WIOA in the Federal Register:

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act: Joint Rule for Unified and Combined State Plans, Performance Accountability, and the One-Stop System Joint Provisions
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act: Department of Labor Only
- State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program; State Supported Employment Services Program; Limitations on Use of Subminimum Wage
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act: Miscellaneous Program Changes
- Programs and Activities Authorized by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act)