



Federal Legislative Update

Quarter 2, June 2017



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

Apprenticeship

The president placed strong emphasis on workforce development by signing an executive order designed to expand apprenticeships to train people for millions of unfilled jobs.

The executive order calls for:

- establishing industry-recognized apprenticeships;
- expanding access to apprenticeships;
- promoting apprenticeship programs at colleges and universities;
- establishing a task force on apprenticeship expansion; and
- improving the effectiveness of workforce development programs.

The Omnibus Funding Bill

The president signed the fiscal year (FY) 2017 Omnibus Funding Bill on May 5, 2017. This bill continues to fund the federal government through September 30, 2017. For the most part, funding for job training programs remained the same as FY 2016, with the exception of an \$8.5 million cut to Employment Services from \$680 to \$671 million. Apprenticeship programs received a \$5 million increase in funding, from \$90 to \$95 million.

Promoting Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Professions

On February 27, 2017, the president signed two bills designed to help promote women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) professions.

The INSPIRE Women Act encourages young girls and women to pursue careers in space science. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is required by law to be engaged with this

program. Through the support of several existing programs, NASA will encourage young girls and women to study STEM subjects in school.

The Promoting Women in Entrepreneurship Act amends the Science and Engineering Equal Opportunities Act to authorize the National Science Foundation to promote entrepreneurial programs aimed at women in STEM fields. The objective is for women to look beyond the laboratory and develop research into consumable and marketable products.

Pell Reauthorization

On May 4, 2017, members of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce introduced the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act to improve career and technical education. The act also reauthorizes the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act.

The legislation is bipartisan and will help individuals enter the workforce with the knowledge and skills needed to compete for in-demand jobs. The bill also:

- provides more flexibility in using federal resources;
- supports innovative learning opportunities and addresses state and local needs;
- increases transparency and accountability; and
- ensures the federal role is limited.

Postsecondary Data

The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee introduced The College Transparency Act, which would substantially revamp the nation's postsecondary education data system to collect student-level data on such topics as enrollment, retention, completion, student aid, student loan repayment, and earnings and employment after program exit.

The bill would revise the Higher Education Act to create a postsecondary data system that will protect student privacy; encourage students to make more informed choices; align education with the labor market demand; and reduce the reporting burden for colleges and universities.

Additionally, the new legislation calls for the data system to help students and families choose programs that demonstrate strong outcomes and to assist policymakers and educators in implementing policies and practices that help more students succeed.

Education

On March 28, 2017, President Trump rescinded House Joint Resolutions 57 and 58 under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a 2015 law that was passed with bipartisan support and signed by President Obama.

House Joint Resolution 57 prohibits the Department of Education from controlling how the states and school districts measure achievement. The law now authorizes states to develop systems for holding school districts accountable.

House Joint Resolution 58 terminates the requirement in ESSA for states to determine the effectiveness of teacher-preparation programs.

ESSA helps ensure educational opportunity for all. Notably, the act:

- reduces the federal role in education;
- maintains important information about student performance;
- restores fiscal discipline;
- supports at-risk populations;
- supports efforts to update policies to reflect state and local efforts;
- expands access to high-quality preschool;
- recognizes parent involvement in their child's education; and
- improves accountability for student learning outcomes.

Other Workforce-Related Legislation

The following bills were recently introduced and will continue to be monitored throughout the 115th Congress. Bill summaries may include information from GovTrack and the Library of Congress.

HR 338 – The 21st Century Energy Workforce Development Jobs Initiative Act. The bill would direct the Department of Energy to prioritize pathways to energy sector jobs for minorities through several program activities, including outreach and partnership with minority-serving institutions and state and local workforce boards.

HR 856 – The Putting Our Veterans Back to Work Act. This bill would reauthorize the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program, which expired in March 2014. The Veterans Retraining Assistance Program offered unemployed veterans ages 35 to 60 a yearlong job training benefit. The legislation would extend this benefit through 2020.

HR 1050 – The Youth Access to American Jobs Act. This bill would authorize a 10 site pilot program to support joint school district, community college, and apprenticeship projects leading to an associate degree program in a technical field for high-growth or in-demand jobs.

HR 1748 – The Opening Doors for Youth Act. This bill would authorize three programs related to youth employment. One, authorized at \$1.5 billion per year, would provide formula allotted funding to subsidize summer jobs for in- and out-of-school young people ages 14 to 24. A second formula allotment program, authorized at \$2 billion per year, would provide for partially subsidized, year-round jobs for out-of-school young people ages 16 to 24. Another \$2 billion would be authorized for competitive grants for community-based systems that help at-risk youth remain in or reconnect with education and training programs.

HR 2207 – The Community College to Career Fund Act. This bill would authorize a competitive grant program that supports partnerships between employers and community colleges to develop curriculum, training programs, and internships in high-demand fields.

HR 2554 – The Direct Connect to Success Act. This bill would require states to provide community college graduates who finish with a 2.0 grade-point average with automatic admissions and full credit transfer to public universities.

SB 795 – The Workforce Advance Act. This bill aims to increase dual enrollment in technical education. It would allow local schools to use their Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act funding for college tuition and fees. It would also allow states to use Perkins leadership funding to develop their technical education programs and would authorize the Department of Education to use Perkins national activities funding to identify and disseminate best practices in technical dual enrollment.

SB 862 – The American Apprenticeship Act. This bill would authorize a \$15 million Department of Labor program that provides grants to states in order to defray the costs of classroom training, known as related instruction, for apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeship programs.

SB 1004 – The CTE Excellence and Equity Act. This bill would support new and innovative approaches to career and technical education by providing high school students with access to real world education through partnerships with industry and higher education. These partnerships prepare students to graduate and enroll in postsecondary education and with the ability to use knowledge to solve complex problems, think critically, communicate effectively, collaborate with others, and develop academic mindsets.

SB 1136 – The Pell Grant Preservation and Expansion Act. This bill would restructure the Pell grant program. It would increase the Pell grant maximum award by \$500 over next year's \$5,920 level. The legislation would extend Pell grants to short-term job training programs and extend lifetime Pell eligibility from 12 to 14 semesters. It would restore Pell eligibility for students who received the aid at schools that close and extend eligibility to the incarcerated, ex-offenders with drug-related convictions, and undocumented immigrants who entered the country as children.

SB 1215 – The Foster Youth Independence Act. This bill would allow states to use federal foster care funding to provide foster care to young people up to age 21 and to provide services such as education, job training, and alternative housing to former foster youth up to age 23.

SB 1245 – The Advancing Career Pathways Innovation Act. This bill would authorize a competitive grant program to help schools employ coordinators to get career pathway programming in line with industry. Funds would be allowed for equipment and infrastructure, curriculum development, professional development, youth apprenticeships, and dual enrollment.