



# Federal Legislative Update

Quarter 4, December 2016



## 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.

The 114<sup>th</sup> United States Congress came to a close as the 115<sup>th</sup> United States Congress convened January 3, 2017. The 115<sup>th</sup> session will meet through January 3, 2019, during the first two years of Donald Trump's presidency. The 2016 elections maintained republican control in both the House and Senate.

## Membership and Leadership

The House of Representatives has 435 voting members, consisting of 194 democrats and 241 republicans.

The Senate has 100 senators, consisting of 46 democrats, 52 republicans, and 2 independents.

The 115<sup>th</sup> Congress includes the following leadership:

### Senate

Senate President	Mike Pence
Senate President pro tempore	Orrin Hatch
Majority Leader (Republican)	Mitch McConnell
Majority Whip	John Cornyn
Minority Leader (Democratic)	Chuck Schumer
Minority Whip	Richard Durbin

### House of Representatives

House Speaker	Paul Ryan
Majority Leader (Republican)	Kevin McCarthy
Majority Whip	Steve Scalise
Minority Leader (Democratic)	Nancy Pelosi
Minority Whip	Steny Hoyer

## Committees and Chairs

Representative Virginia Foxx (R-North Carolina) was selected to serve as the chairwoman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce for the 115<sup>th</sup> congressional session. Representative Foxx spent most of her career as a teacher and administrator in the higher education system. For the last six years, she served as chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training.

## Recent Highlights from Congress

### Continuing Resolution

Before the holiday break, Congress finished work on a continuing resolution that will keep the federal government funded through April 28, 2017, with a cost of \$1.069.6 billion. This continuing resolution was necessary due to the expiration of existing funding on December 9. In the absence of an approved federal spending bill, a continuing resolution continues the funding for discretionary programs at a rate or formula consistent with the previous fiscal year. The new resolution extends funding for federal workforce investments under the Departments of Labor and Education while extending the authorization of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program through April.

### Apprenticeship

November 14-20 was the second annual National Apprenticeship Week, which is an opportunity to promote the registered apprenticeship program. Throughout the week, local community colleges, employers, and unions with apprenticeship programs hosted open houses to showcase their programs, facilities, and apprentices to explain how the apprenticeship program works. This annual event also provides employers, education, and labor an opportunity to highlight how registered apprenticeship meets the needs for a skilled workforce.

In other apprenticeship news, the U.S. Department of Labor announced \$50.5 million in grants to help states develop and implement new strategies to expand apprenticeship. The grants are intended to engage industry, workforce partners, and employers to expand and market apprenticeship programs to new sectors and underserved populations. Grantees are also expected to collaborate with employers to start new programs, as well expand and diversify participation in apprenticeship through state innovations and incentives. Grants were awarded to 37 states, with grant awards ranging from \$700,000 to \$2.7 million.

## Appropriations 101

Each year, Congress decides how the government will spend money for the next fiscal year. In general, the appropriations process addresses both the mandatory and discretionary portions of the budget.

The majority of federal spending consists of mandatory spending, also known as entitlements. Mandatory programs include Social Security and Medicare. Legislation defines the eligibility criteria for participation in mandatory programs, and the government allocates funds to those who are eligible, regardless of the annual cost.

Discretionary spending is defined as optional spending. This type of spending is not necessary but may be useful and includes funding for military-related programs. Other relevant programs include early childhood education programs; Pell grants; food assistance for women, infants and children; and training and placement for unemployed people, among many others. Discretionary funded programs have annual allocations with predetermined levels of funding available for the fiscal year.

The allocation process begins when the president submits the annual budget request to Congress. The request may include economic projections and analysis, proposed program funding levels, and projected deficits and surpluses for the next 10 years. The budget request may also include new policies or changes the president would like to enact.

Each budget resolution includes a 302(a) allocation, which is the total amount of discretionary funding requested for the next fiscal year. Similar to traditional legislation, budget resolutions are sent to the relevant committees and must be approved by the whole chamber. Once the 302(a) allocation has been determined, the appropriations committees take over. Specific subcommittees then create 12 separate appropriations bills, known as the 302(b) allocation. These bills are then brought to the full committee for a vote. All 12 appropriations bills must be passed through both chambers and then signed by the president by the start of the federal fiscal year. Failure to do so could result in a government shutdown.

As with traditional legislation, the president has the authority to veto appropriations bills. Congress can then attempt to override the veto with a two-thirds vote, which is required in both chambers.

### Other Workforce-Related Legislation

The following bills were recently introduced and will continue to be monitored throughout the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress:

**HR 34 – The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures Act.** This medical research and health bill includes a provision to authorize the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program through the end of fiscal year 2017, as well as a social impact bond initiative applicable for a variety of welfare-to-work purposes.

**HR 6064 – The Partnerships for the Future Act.** This bill would authorize a \$100 million per year, three-year Department of Labor training grant program to support science, technology, engineering, and math programs. A variety of education and training providers partnered with employers or employer groups would be eligible to apply. Grants would be limited to \$3 million for individual school projects or \$20 million for consortia projects. Priority would be given to projects that include employer contributions to training costs or agreement to hire participants, and projects that target the long-term unemployed.

**HR 6117 – The Opening Doors for Youth Act.** This bill would authorize a \$1.5 billion summer youth employment program, a \$2 billion year-round youth employment program, and a \$2 billion competitive grant program to fund projects that improve local high school graduation and youth employment rates.

**HR 6312 – The Allow Act.** The bill would recognize occupational licenses issued by any state on military bases and other federal properties. This would allow, for example, an electrician, beautician, or nurse licensed in Georgia to work on a military base in Hawaii. The bill would also

limit the District of Columbia's power to require occupational licenses and nullify licensing for tour guides who work in national military parks, national battlefields, and the National Mall and Memorial Parks.

**SB 3021 – The Veterans Education Improvement Act.** This bill permits veterans to use the Department of Veterans Affairs post 9/11 educational assistance for an accredited independent study program leading to a certificate from an educational institution that is not an institution of higher learning, such as an area career and technical education school providing postsecondary level education.