

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

The Omnibus Spending Bill

The president signed the fiscal year (FY) 2016 Omnibus Spending Bill on December 18, 2015. This bill continues to fund the federal government through September 30, 2016. The bill provides increases in funding for key workforce, adult education, apprenticeship, and career and technical education programs.

The omnibus bill also extends the spending limits as part of negotiations from the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015, which prevents the federal government from defaulting on its debt and suspends the debt ceiling until March 15, 2017.

Training

- WIOA Adult: \$815.5 million (FY 2015: \$776.7 million)
This program assists disadvantaged, low-skilled unemployed and underemployed adults to gain the skills and credentials needed to compete in the workforce.
- WIOA Youth: \$873.4 million (FY 2015: \$831.8 million)
This program prepares youth for jobs or postsecondary education through career guidance, educational attainment, and training assistance.
- WIOA Dislocated Worker: \$1.2 billion (FY 2015: \$1.2 billion)
This program prepares and provides training for dislocated workers for new jobs and careers.
- WIOA Governor's Reserve (set-aside): 15 percent (FY 2015: 10 percent)
These funds are used to implement state-led workforce development and job-creation efforts. This increase provides governors more than \$145.0 million in additional funds.
- Registered Apprenticeship: \$90.0 million (FY 2015: not funded)
Apprenticeship is a training program that allows participants to gain academic knowledge and on-the-job skills while earning a paycheck.
- Wagner-Peyser Employment Service: \$680.0 million (FY 2015: \$664.0 million)
This program provides comprehensive recruiting, job search, and related services to businesses and job seekers to connect employers seeking workers and individuals seeking employment.



U.S. House of Representatives

Education

- Career and Technical Education: \$1.1 billion (FY 2015: \$1.1 billion)
Secondary and postsecondary career and technical education programs prepare youth and adults for success in the workforce.
- Adult Education and Family Literacy: \$582.0 million (FY 2015: \$568.9 million)
Adult education and family literacy includes adult basic education and literacy programs and English language programs for adults.

The omnibus bill restored a portion of the *ability-to-benefit* provision of the Higher Education Act. This provision gives students lacking a high school diploma or its equivalent the ability to access federal aid if they are enrolled in an eligible career pathway program and can demonstrate college readiness.

Appropriations

On February 9, 2016, the president unveiled his FY 2017 budget request. The request proposes substantial new investments for education and training, renews requests from the FY 2016 request, and includes enhancements for existing programs.

Training:

- Adult: \$842.4 million (\$26.8 million above FY 2016)
- Youth: \$902.1 million (\$28.7 million above FY 2016)
- Dislocated Worker: \$1.3 billion (\$92.4 million above FY 2016)
- Governor's Reserve (set-aside): 15 percent (consistent with FY 2016 levels)
- Wagner-Peyser Employment Service: \$680.0 million (consistent with FY 2016 levels)
- Trade Adjustment Assistance: \$450.0 million (\$58.5 million above FY 2016)
- Apprenticeship: \$90.0 million (was not funded in FY 2016)

Education:

- Career and Technical Education: \$1.1 billion (consistent with FY 2016 levels)
- Adult Education: \$582.0 million (consistent with FY 2016 levels)
- Pell Grants: \$22.5 billion (consistent with FY 2016 levels)

Every Student Succeeds Act

Originally signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965, the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) was the overarching federal K–12 education law. Since then, Congress has periodically reauthorized the ESEA—notably in 2002 when Congress passed the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

The most recent reauthorization was on December 10, 2015, when President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act.

The new law helps ensure an educational opportunity for all; notably, the bill:

- reduces the federal role in education and returns the responsibility for student achievement to states, school districts, and parents;
- maintains important information about student performance;
- restores fiscal discipline by eliminating ineffective federal programs and by investing limited taxpayer dollars;
- supports at-risk populations;
- maintains separate funding streams for programs and strengthens each targeted population to improve performance;
- supports efforts to update policies that reflect current state and local efforts to improve and measure the quality of teaching;
- expands access to high-quality preschool;
- recognizes that parents must play an active role in their child's education;
- maintains and protects state and local independence for public 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 114th Congress:

HR 4386 – *The Pathways to Affordable Education Act*. The bill would improve the federal Pell Grant Program by allowing funding assistance to students year round and raising the award level to \$9,139 per year. The bill would also increase the lifetime limit for students to obtain postsecondary education and help expand early awareness to prepare students to make informed decisions about their educational journey.

HR 4583 – *The 21st Century Energy Workforce Development Jobs Initiative Act*. The bill directs the Department of Energy to prioritize education and training for energy and manufacturing related jobs in order to increase the number of skilled workers training to work in those fields. Specifically, the bill encourages the nation's education system to equip students with the skills, mentorships, training, and technical expertise necessary to fill the employment opportunities that are vital to managing and operating the nation's energy and manufacturing industries.