

SUPPORT REAUTHORIZATION OF THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT (WIA)

ACTION NEEDED: Urge your House and Senate members to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) during the 113th Congress. NACO supports a Workforce Investment Act (WIA) that promotes innovation and flexibility at the state and local level, which is responsive to local emerging economic realities and business needs, and will ensure that U.S. workers and businesses have the skills and training they need to compete in the 21st century economy.

BACKGROUND: In 1998, Congress established a framework for the nation's workforce development system under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). The law replaced multiple existing training programs with state formula grants, and created a nationwide network of locally administered "one stop" centers where both workers and employers could access training, employment and support programs administered through the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and other agencies, such as the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services.

Administered at the federal level with DOL's Employment and Training Administration (ETA), WIA is the largest single source of federal funding for workforce development activities. WIA has five titles:

- Title I – Workforce Investment Systems- authorizes state and local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs); establishes a formula by which funds for youth, adult and dislocated workers programs flow from the federal level, through the states, to the local level; establishes performance metrics; and authorizes the nation's youth workforce development and "one-stop" career center systems.
- Title II – Adult Education and Literacy- authorizes the Adult Education and Literacy System, which is administered at the state level to provide adult basic education and literacy programs.
- Title III – Workforce Investment Related Activities- amends the Wagner-Peyser Act, which is administered at the state level to provide labor exchange services to

QUICK FACTS

- WIA authorizes the nation's public workforce development system
- Local elected officials play a pivotal role in the administration of Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs
- The chief elected official (CEO) of local government is responsible for appointing the local Workforce Investment Board (WIB), and setting policy for the workforce system to achieve broader human capital and economic development goals
- Local governments partner with federal, state, other local governments and the private sector through Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs)
- There are 522 county operated local workforce investment boards (LWIBs) in the nation
- WIA was envisioned as a nexus for the coordination of resources to close the gaps between the skills of America's workforce and business' needs for workers

job seekers.

- Title IV – Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998- amends the nation’s Rehabilitation Act, which is administered at the state level to primarily serve the career development needs of those living with disabilities.
- Title V – General Provisions- includes provisions for a state unified plan, which encourages joint planning and coordination among programs authorized in Title I-IV of WIA.

Most critical to county governments is Title I of WIA, which authorizes the service delivery system and calls for coordination among all levels of government. Title I is the “core” of WIA. It establishes the infrastructure through which all public funding related to workforce development flows and is coordinated.

Local elected officials play a pivotal role in the administration of WIA. The leadership role of elected officials is essential to maximizing WIA’s impact in state and local jurisdictions through collaboration with state and local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), and setting policy for the workforce system to achieve broader human capital and economic development goals. The chief elected official (CEO) is designated in local operating agreements covering local workforce investment areas, and plays a key role in WIA, as the vast majority of the funds flow to the local level to be invested in alignment with a local plan. Like the governor, the CEO is liable for these funds, which can be administered either by local government or by a fiscal agent designated by the CEO. The CEO also appoints the local WIB chair, who is accountable to the CEO for planning and oversight of the public workforce services in the area.

Despite growing evidence of economic recovery, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that 7.8 percent of Americans remain unemployed, and millions more lack the job skills or educational credentials they need to advance their careers. At the same time, U.S. employers are struggling to fill current job openings, in part because they are unable to find qualified, trained candidates. With nearly two-thirds of all job openings between 2008-2018 projected to require at least some postsecondary education and training, it is clear that we should take concrete steps to address growing skills gaps that can otherwise stifle our economic growth for years to come.

Federal workforce programs are part of the solution. Last year, more than 9 million individuals received training and related services supported under Title I of WIA an increase of nearly 250 percent in just two years—and more than half of these individuals found employment in a tough labor market.

The law authorizing WIA expired in 2003 and is currently unauthorized yet operating through the annual appropriations process, despite vast changes in economic conditions and the skill needs of a growing unemployed and underemployed population. Given these changes, it is critically important that Congress act to modernize the nation’s workforce development system to ensure that individuals at all skill levels are able to obtain the training and education they need to secure and keep jobs that lead to economic self-sufficiency, while also ensuring that businesses have access to the skilled workforce they need to compete in the global economy. Local workforce development areas are working diligently to achieve these goals.

KEY ISSUES:

- Urge your Members of Congress to support the introduction and passage of legislation which reauthorizes the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) during the 113th Congress. Specifically, we support legislation that promotes innovation and flexibility at the local level and is responsive to local emerging economic realities and business needs, and will ensure that U.S. workers and businesses have the skills training they need to compete in the 21st century economy.

- As the United States continues to face high unemployment in the wake of the recent recession, federally funded workforce programs play a critical role in bridging gaps between the skills present in the workforce and the skills needed for available jobs.
- The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) envisions a prominent role for local boards and local stakeholders. As the preamble to the WIA regulations explains, the focus of these “local, business-led boards” is “strategic planning, policy development and oversight of the local workforce investment system.”
- Local elected officials play a pivotal role in the administration of WIA. The leadership role of elected officials is essential to maximizing WIA’s impact in state and local jurisdictions through collaboration with state and local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), and setting policy for the workforce system to achieve broader human capital and economic development goals. The chief local elected official (CEO) of local government is designated in local operating agreements covering local workforce investment areas, and is responsible for appointing the local workforce investment board (WIB), which is accountable to the CEO for planning and oversight of the public workforce services in the area.
- Local workforce development areas are best suited to adequately determine services and programs that effectively respond to local emerging economic realities and business needs. Local workforce areas should be given the authority, and the flexibility to develop programs that meet the needs of employers and employees alike. This should include the flexibility to develop sector-based, incumbent worker, and other specialized training services that respond to local economic development policies and business needs.
- To build upon the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) system, and to minimize any negative impacts on workforce development efforts at the state and local level, NACo believes the following principles should be followed in any WIA reauthorization bills Congress introduces and considers this session:
 1. Maintain the current governance structure including;
 - a. the local public-private partnership;
 - b. the federal-state-local relationship;
 - c. local elected official appointment authority for local workforce investment boards;
 - d. plan development and implementation by local elected officials and local workforce boards; and
 - e. oversight by local elected officials and local workforce investment boards of the local one-stop centers;
 2. Maintain the current flow of funds from the federal to the state and local levels including the percentage allotments to states and allocations to local areas;
 3. Enhance services to incumbent workers as part of an ongoing economic development and worker skills enhancement efforts;
 4. Reduce the number or percentage of public sector representatives and increase the number or percentage of private sector representatives on local workforce investment boards;
 5. Improve the funding structure for local one-stop centers through a separate appropriation or through state allocated contributions from the one stop mandatory partners;
 6. Reduce and simplify all performance standards and measures; and
 7. Maintain youth programs as currently constructed so that in- and out-of school youth may be served

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