

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

R. BRUCE JOSTEN  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT  
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business federation representing the interests of more than three million businesses of all sizes, sectors, and regions, as well as state and local chambers and industry associations, and dedicated to promoting, protecting, and defending America's free enterprise system, supports the "Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)."

In America today, there are millions of jobs that remain unfilled while, at the same time, there are tens of millions of Americans who are unemployed. The U.S. Department of Labor predicts this skills gap will continue to increase, and there will be a shortage of more than 35 million skilled workers over the next 30 years. To increase U.S. competitiveness, we must educate, train, attract, and invest in employees who are able to compete and grow in the 21st century. WIOA is a bipartisan compromise between H.R. 803, the "SKILLS Act," and S. 1356, the "Workforce Investment Act of 2013," and it would provide a reasonable path towards a long-overdue reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act. While concerns remain with some of the provisions in the compromise, the Chamber supports many of WIOA's improvements to the country's workforce and training system and, ultimately, the legislation as a whole.

In particular, the Chamber is pleased to see that WIOA would maintain the requirement of a business majority for state and local workforce boards. And, while reducing the number of required board members even further would have made the boards less wieldy, the reduction of required board members that is included in the legislation is a step in the right direction. Further, in order to focus training on employment needs in local and regional economies, the new requirements on board engagement with the local business community and coordination with economic development agencies would also be positive.

In addition to making changes to the state and local workforce boards, WIOA would eliminate many ineffective and duplicative federal training and employment programs. This consolidation, when combined with the 15 percent set-aside to support state-based innovation and activities; the additional state and local flexibility for the delivery of services; the improvements in those services for individuals with disabilities; the focus on tangible outcomes for disconnected youth; and the authority to transfer funds between adult and dislocated worker programs, would allow more individuals to efficiently receive the services they need to not only find a job, but also stay employed.

Lastly, WIOA would provide a path towards improved data management systems, with the goal of strengthening program coordination, accountability, and program alignment. While

the Chamber would have liked to see these data provisions go further, the changes in WIOA recognize the need to increase transparency and accountability within the workforce training system. These performance measure changes, when combined with the emphasis on industry-recognized credentials and licensure programs and changes in board composition and operative requirements, would enable state and local boards to more adeptly respond to the needs of the state, regional, and local workforce systems. They also would facilitate timely access to relevant training for adults and dislocated workers, all while maintaining choice of qualified providers.

The Chamber supports this legislation and urges passage, while looking forward to continued work with Congress and the Administration on ways to innovate and modernize workforce development to achieve a truly employer-centric system that drives economic growth, competitiveness, and opportunity. Ultimately, the “Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act” represents an important step in improving program efficacy and administration of the workforce training system, which is good for workers, employers, and the economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Bruce Josten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "R." and last name "Josten" being the most prominent parts.

R. Bruce Josten