

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

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Strengthening Cities Through
Workforce Development



THE U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

October 5, 2026



Appropriations

On Wednesday, September 30, Senate Appropriations Chair Susan Collins (ME) said the Government Accountability Office (GAO) may be reluctant to sue the Trump Administration over its withholding of congressionally approved funds in a pocket rescission without explicit authorization from Congress. Collins said Acting Comptroller General Orice Williams Brown may be hesitant to bring such a lawsuit while serving in an acting capacity. Brown has led GAO since Gene Dodaro retired in December 2025. The issue centers on the Impoundment Control Act of 1974, which governs the executive branch's authority to withhold funds appropriated by Congress. Last week, GAO said that the law does not permit the Administration to withhold the funds beyond the end of FY26 unless Congress approves the rescissions.

On Tuesday, September 29, 10 nonprofit housing organizations filed a lawsuit challenging the Administration's cancellation of more than \$56 million in Department of Housing and Urban Development funding for housing counseling services. The groups are seeking to temporarily block the funding cuts while the case proceeds.

Secretary of Labor Confirmation

On Wednesday, September 30, the Senate confirmed Keith Sonderling as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) by a vote of 47-41. Sonderling has served as Acting Secretary since April, after the departure of former Labor Secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer, and will now formally lead the agency. Sonderling, who was nominated by President Trump in June, previously served as a Commissioner on the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission from

2020 to 2024. He also held positions in DOL's Wage and Hour Division during Trump's first term.

Ready to Work Act

On Wednesday, September 30, Senator Chris Van Hollen (MD) introduced the Ready to Work Act, which would establish a federal program at the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to create employment opportunities for workers who have been unemployed for six months or more. The program would provide funding to local workforce development boards and community-based organizations to offer jobs, training, supportive services, and career assistance to long-term unemployed workers.

The bill would also provide competitive grants to communities with high rates of poverty and chronic unemployment to support locally driven workforce strategies, including worker-owned enterprises. Funding could support services that address barriers to employment, including transportation, childcare, job readiness training, and substance use treatment.

[Click here](#) to access the full press release and learn more about the legislation.

Make AI Work for Americans Act

On Thursday, September 24, Senator Mark Kelly (AZ) introduced the Make AI Work for Americans Act, which would establish a federal trust fund to support workers, jobseekers, and communities impacted by changes to the economy from artificial intelligence (AI).

The bill would establish the AI Horizon Fund, financed through three taxes on companies that benefit from AI, including taxes on excess profits, digital advertising services and AI usage. A 15-member Artificial Intelligence Advisory Council, including representatives from AI, labor, higher education and workforce development, would oversee the fund. It would use the fund to expand workforce development, education, research, economic development and labor market programs; establish a paid National Service for America's Future program that would provide pathways to credentials, certifications and registered apprenticeships; and expand entrepreneurship training, technical assistance and startup capital. It also would increase unemployment benefits to replace 75 percent of workers' wages for up to 26 weeks and expand access to training, including through community college partnership programs designed to respond to changes in employer and labor market demand.

[Click here](#) to access the full press release and learn more about the legislation.

Direct Creation, Advancement, and Retention of Employment Opportunity Act

On Wednesday, September 30, House Education and Workforce Ranking Member Bobby Scott (VA), Congresswoman Adelita Grijalva (AZ), and Congresswoman Susie Lee (NV) announced plans to reintroduced the Direct Creation, Advancement, and Retention of Employment (CARE) Opportunity Act of 2026. The bill would provide funding to support recruitment, retention, training and career advancement for direct care workers, including through registered apprenticeships, mentoring, and career pathways. The legislation would provide funding to states and other entities to develop strategies to strengthen the direct care workforce pipeline and support career advancement.

[Click here](#) to access the press release and learn more about the bill.

Federal Emergency Mobilization Accountability Workforce Planning Act

On Monday, September 28, Congressmen Troy A. Carter Sr. (LA), Mike Ezell (MS), and Bennie Thompson (MS) introduced the Federal Emergency Mobilization Accountability (FEMA) Workforce Planning Act, which would require the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to develop and submit workforce plans to Congress to strengthen its capacity to respond to natural disasters and other emergencies.

It would require the FEMA Administrator to develop a human capital operating plan based on workforce planning best practices identified by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the Comptroller General. The plan would address employee recruitment and retention, workforce training and deployment, and the use of workforce data to identify and address staffing gaps. FEMA would be required to submit the plan to the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs and the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure every three years.

[Click here](#) to access the full press release and learn more about the legislation.

Cyber Centers of Excellence Partnership Act

On Friday, October 2, Senators Jacky Rosen (NV) and Ted Budd (NC) introduced the bipartisan Cyber Centers of Excellence Partnership Act to strengthen the nation's cybersecurity readiness and workforce development. The bill would establish a partnership between the Department of Defense and universities designated by the National Security Agency as National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity, creating opportunities to share research, best practices, and emerging approaches between the public and private sectors. The program would also strengthen collaboration between leading research institutions and military cyber units while creating pathways for qualified students to pursue federal cybersecurity careers.

[Click here](#) to access the full press release and learn more about the legislation.

Letter on NIH Grants

On Friday, September 25, several Senate Democrats sent a letter to White House Director of the Office of Management and Budget Russ Vought opposing efforts to exert political control over National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant-making decisions. Senate Appropriations Vice Chair Patty Murray (WA) and Ranking Member of the Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee Tammy Baldwin (WI) led the letter.

[Click here](#) to access the letter.

Unemployment Rate

On Friday, October 2, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) released the September unemployment report, showing that nonfarm payroll employment increased by only 29,000, well below expectations. Job gains for July and August were also

revised downwards by a combined 60,000, with July's total revised to show a loss of 10,000 jobs. The unemployment rate rose to 4.2 percent from 4.1 percent in August, largely reflecting an increase of 485,000 people entering the labor force. Average wages increased 3.0 percent over the past year, down from 3.1 percent in August. The report showed continued weakness in hiring but no widespread increase in layoffs, reflecting a labor market in which workers are facing fewer opportunities to enter or move within the workforce.

[Click here](#) to access the full report.

[Click here](#) to access Secretary Sonderling's statement on the report.



Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 15-26

On Tuesday, September 29, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA) released the Unemployment Insurance Program Letter (UIPL) *Fiscal Year 2027 State Workforce Agency Unemployment Insurance Resource Planning Targets and Guidelines*.

[Click here](#) to access the full UIPL.

Initial Jobless Claims

In the week ending September 26, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims was 197,000, a decrease of 1,000 from the previous week's revised level. The previous week's level was revised up by 1,000 from 197,000 to 198,000. The 4-week moving average was 200,000, a decrease of 2,500 from the previous week's revised average.

[Click here](#) to access the full report.



Mayor Mamdani Announces Nearly \$700,000 in New Investments in Early Childhood Educator Apprenticeships to Advance Universal Child Care Efforts Across the City

On Friday, October 2, Mayor Zohran Kwame Mamdani, the NYC Office of Talent and Workforce Development (NYC Talent), and the Mayor's Office of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (OCCECE) announced new investments of \$667,190 to expand two apprenticeship training programs in early childhood education (ECE). This investment brings the total to over \$1.2 million invested in ECE apprenticeships by NYC Talent to transform the way we recruit, train, and retain early childhood educators.

[Click here](#) to access the full press release.

How Workforce Development Delivers ROI: The Cost of Standing Still

Organizations have long understood the importance of training and development. Yet when budgets tighten, workforce development is often viewed as a discretionary expense rather than a strategic investment. The challenge is not that leaders doubt the value of skills. It's that many organizations struggle to connect workforce development initiatives to measurable business outcomes.

[Click here](#) to access the full article.

As AI Changes Work, Employers Must Rethink How Careers Begin

As Workforce Development Month comes to a close, the challenge remains: How do we prepare people for jobs that are changing in real time while continuing to build the talent businesses need? For decades, early-career employees built skills by performing foundational tasks, learning from colleagues and taking on greater responsibility over time.

[Click here](#) to read the full article.

New York State Unemployment System to Get Massive Upgrades

The state's ancient unemployment insurance system, long criticized for moving at a snail's pace and its antiquated interface, is set to receive its first major overhaul in 50 years. The state Department of Labor on Monday announced that starting Nov. 2 at 5 p.m., the state's unemployment insurance system will be down for nine to 12 days for a top-to-bottom update that will bring it into the 21st century. While it's down, New Yorkers won't be able to file new claims or certify weekly benefits, and the entire system will be unavailable.

[Click here](#) to access the full article.

Former Education Secretary Talks Early Learning, Work Development in Fort Worth

Fort Worth is a leader in early childhood education at the state level and federal level, and lawmakers should look at communities like Fort Worth for policy solutions, according to a

former U.S. secretary of education. Margaret Spellings, who previously served as the U.S. secretary of education under President George W. Bush, said providing quality childcare and early learning opportunities to families will require leaders to be “more efficient, more connected, more data-oriented (and) more outcomes orientated.”

[Click here](#) to access the full article.

New Jersey Lawmaker Wants to Blunt Impacts of AI in the Workplace

A New Jersey Senate panel unanimously advanced legislation that would require preapproval for a range of automated digital tools in the workplace and limit the use of electronic monitoring inside and outside of the workplace. The bill is backed widely by New Jersey labor unions and opposed by business groups who cautioned it could ensnare and penalize companies for routine technology decisions or existing tools. It is one lawmaker’s attempt to blunt the job market impacts of artificial intelligence.

[Click here](#) to access the full article.



New from U.S. Department of Education

U.S. Department of Education Approves Workforce Pell Grant Programs in Florida

On Monday, September 28, the U.S. Department of Education (the Department) approved four Workforce Pell Grant programs in Florida, marking the sixth state in the nation to receive program approvals. Eligible students at Eastern Florida State College can now use Federal Pell dollars to enroll in programs that will prepare students for careers as firefighters, correctional officers, emergency management technicians, and more.

[Click here](#) to access the full press release.

New from Apprenticeships for America

AFA Releases New Report on Public Sector Apprenticeships

On Thursday, October 1, Apprenticeships for America (AFA) released a new report on the efforts and emerging models of intermediaries working to scale apprenticeships in the public sector.

[Click here](#) to access the report.

New from National Governors Association

Addressing the Cost of Care: Child Care Access and Affordability

Across the country, Governors are working to bring down the cost of living for everyday Americans, and improving child care access and affordability remains a key priority in those efforts. Governors are supporting families who face a limited supply of providers or struggle to afford care, while helping providers navigate rising operating costs, workforce shortages, and complex regulatory and administrative requirements. On September 23, the NGA Children & Families team convened Human Services Policy Advisors to discuss how states and territories are strategically investing in child care. The conversation focused on how Governors can support provider reimbursement, expand access for families, and invest in the child care workforce, with state spotlights from North Carolina, Indiana, and Massachusetts.

[Click here](#) to access the full article.



Fact of the Week

A new report released by the Alliance for America's Skilled Trades, "The State of America's Skilled Trades: A National Report," finds that the U.S. will need to fill an estimated 1.7 million skilled trades opening each year through 2035, while training programs produce just 55 workers for every 100 needed.

[Click here](#) to access the report and learn more.



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