



## **WEEKLY NEWSLETTER**

April 22, 2024

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# **Washington Update**

## **House Appropriations Committee Hearing**

On Wednesday, April 17, U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Acting Secretary Julie Su testified in support of President Biden's FY25 budget request to the House Appropriations Committee. During the hearing on the White House's \$13.9 billion request for FY25, Su defended the proposed \$2.9 billion in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) grants and \$285 million for registered apprentices in order to accomplish President Biden's goal of building the economy from the "middle out and bottom up." Su also emphasized her Department's commitment to combating child labor violations, including the Administration's request for \$7.5 million for the DOL Wage and Hour Division to successfully confront the issue. Acting Secretary Su also reiterated Biden's calls for paid family leave and expanded child care.

[Click here](#) to access a video of the hearing.

## **Senate Appropriations Committee Hearing**

On Tuesday, April 16, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Xavier Becerra testified during a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing on President Biden's FY25 budget request for his agency. One focus of the hearing was the President's wide-ranging goals for early childhood education and care - ranging from Head Start to elder care. The budget request includes \$12.5 billion for Head Start, which provides early education and health services to children from low-income families, as well as a \$544 million increase to help programs comply with the administration's proposal to increase compensation for Head Start workers, which will help programs retain and recruit workers. The increase is \$1.6 billion short of what is needed in FY25 to stave off slot reductions. Senate Appropriations Chair Patty Murray (WA) supported the proposed rule but also noted a lot more work needs to be done to ensure all kids have access to high-quality early childhood education. Senator Murray's Child Care for Working Families Act includes a similar proposal to support pay parity between elementary school teachers and Head Start educators with similar credentials.

[Click here](#) to access a video of the hearing.

## **Digital Skills for Today's Workforce Act**

On Wednesday, April 17, Senator Tim Kaine (VA), along with Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger (VA) and Congressman David Valadao (CA), introduced the bipartisan, bicameral legislation Digital Skills for Today's Workforce Act in order to expand access to digital skills training for job seekers. The legislation would amend the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to establish a new "Digital Skills at Work" grant program to expand digital skills training within postsecondary education, adult education, and workforce development systems. It would make specific, targeted investments in digital skills training to help individuals seeking jobs or upskilling opportunities, as well as Americans with barriers to employment, learn or build digital skills. It would also advance access to good-paying jobs and support the development of digitally resilient education and workforce systems.

[Click here](#) to read a press release on the legislation and learn more.

## **Initial Jobless Claims**

In the week ending April 13, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims was 212,000, unchanged from the previous week's revised level. The previous week's level was revised up by 1,000 from 211,000 to 212,000. The 4-week moving average was 214,500, unchanged from the previous week's revised average. The previous week's average was revised up by 250 from 214,250 to 214,500. The advance seasonally adjusted insured unemployment rate was 1.2 percent for the week ending April 6, unchanged from the previous week's unrevised rate.

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

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## New from DOL/ETA

### **Department of Labor Announces Proposed Information Collection to Build Online Search Tool to Help Find ‘Lost’ Retirement Savings**

On Monday, April 15, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) announced that its Employee Benefits Security Administration is proposing to collect information from plan administrators on a voluntary basis to establish an online search tool to help America’s workers locate lost retirement savings they earned.

Retirement plans, including pension and 401(k) plans, sometimes lose track of people owed benefits due to incomplete recordkeeping, people changing employers and other reasons. In other cases, workers may lose track of their retirement plans after their former employer goes out of business or when companies merge. People in these situations are considered “missing participants.”

The SECURE 2.0 Act directs EBSA to establish a search tool to help missing participants and their beneficiaries find their retirement benefits by December 29, 2024. The agency needs assistance from plan administrators to populate its online “Retirement Savings Lost and Found” database. The notice of proposed information collection asks plan administrators to provide the information voluntarily, and it proposes that plan administrators can attach the requested information to their 2023 Form 5500 once they receive instructions on how to do so.

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

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## WDC in the News

### **It’s Time to Invest in Your Community’s Future Workforce**

As business leaders, we feel the pinch of worker shortages. Positions go unfilled for months; projects get delayed; and growth plans are put on hold—all due to a lack of qualified candidates. It's a frustrating reality, but are we doing enough to address the root issue? Are we proactively investing in developing tomorrow's workforce in our own communities? I would argue most of us are not. We get caught up in the day-to-day operations of our companies and expect the mythical "qualified candidate" to appear when we post a job listing. But the truth is that developing a strong talent pipeline begins long before someone submits a resume. It starts with investing in the youth.

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

## **ACE to Launch Global Data Consortium of the ‘Student Experience’ - Powered by AI**

The American Council on Education announced plans this week to launch a Global Data Consortium in 2025. The nonprofit initiative aims to pool data across institutions worldwide and use AI to make sense of that data in a way that drives student success. “We suffer from both too much data and too little access to those data,” Ted Mitchell, president of ACE, said in announcing the consortium. “And we think the AI revolution is an opportunity to solve that problem.” The consortium would launch with records on 30-35M students worldwide if all the organizations that have committed to the effort move forward. And about two-thirds of those organizations—namely colleges and universities, but also testing companies and the like—would be in the United States. The big idea: Higher education and the testing industry collect reams of data on students, but even at the most sophisticated institutions, that data can be hard to parse. And it is only rarely shared, beyond standardized and often balky reports like IPEDS required by the federal government. The National Student Clearinghouse comes closest, but primarily collects transcript data.

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

## **The Submarine Workforce Crisis: Admitting Realities and Restructuring Long-Term Strategy**

“We have to build and sustain submarines in the next 15 to 17-plus years the same way we did in the ’80s with an industrial base that’s one-third the size.” On a recent trip to Lake Charles, Louisiana, the executive director of program executive office strategic submarines laid out the stark challenge facing the U.S. industrial base.

These concerns are not new. When testifying before the House Armed Services Committee in 2012, then-Chief of Naval Research Adm. Matthew Klunder noted over 50 percent of the submarine industrial workforce would be retirement-eligible by 2020. A decade on from the U.S. Navy raising concerns, the outlook is no better. The Government Accountability Office found that by September 2022, the submarine industrial base was 25 percent below adequate staffing levels to meet their delivery schedules for Virginia-class fast-attack submarines. This workforce crisis has impacted procurement timelines to the point that the U.S. Navy’s ability to maintain an adequately sized underwater fleet for force projection priorities is at risk. As the United States continues to lag behind near-peer competitors in the development of hypersonic missiles, the role of submarines — both conventionally and nuclear-armed — is a priority for maintaining American national security. As such, the most recent 30-year ship building plan from the chief of naval operations intends to dramatically increase the scale of submarine procurement over the next several decades. This scale-up

will only complicate and deepen the workforce crisis as the industrial base struggles to deliver even more submarines.

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

## **Acknowledge the Changing World of Work to Recruit, Retain Gen Z**

Generation Z, which will make up 30 percent of the workforce by 2030, is still something of a mystery to employers trying to figure out how to support them. Chelsea C. Williams, founder and CEO of Reimagine Talent, a national talent development firm headquartered in Raleigh, N.C., offered employers strategies during her session at the SHRM Talent Conference & Expo 2024 in Las Vegas on how to recruit and develop Generation Z. Employers need to understand that members of this generation—the oldest of whom are 27 and whose worldviews have been shaped by significant events such as the pandemic and the student loan crisis—have different expectations of employers than past generations, she noted. “Acknowledge [the] changing world of work. Seek to understand shifts in values, ideals and aspirations,” Williams said.

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

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# Reports & Articles

## **New from Brookings**

### **Three Critical Workforce Challenges: How Would the Presidential Candidates Address Them?**

Workforce development in the U.S.—which includes various forms of private- and publicly-funded job training and support services for workers—could potentially play a critical role in improving earnings for Americans without bachelor’s degrees and reducing inequality. It can help employers find workers who meet a range of critical skill needs. At its best, it could also help raise both employment and productivity in the U.S. economy. For all these reasons and others, workforce development should be part of any administration’s economic policy playbook, including potential second terms for Donald Trump or Joe Biden.

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

## **New from U.S. Economic Development Administration**

### **Recompete Pilot Program is Critical to U.S. Economic Policy**

In this historically tight labor market, economic development programs must target people and places with low levels of employment. The U.S. Economic Development Administration's Recompete Pilot Program (Recompete) is a \$200 million grant program that will provide flexible \$20 million to \$50 million grants to places with persistently low prime-age (ages 25-54) employment rates. This blog post explains how Recompete aims to raise prime-age employment and renew economic opportunity in communities through three key design principles.

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

## **New from U.S. Department of Commerce**

### **Administration Announces Preliminary Terms with Samsung Electronics to Establish Leading-Edge Semiconductor Ecosystem in Central Texas**

On Monday, April 15, the Biden-Harris Administration announced that the U.S. Department of Commerce and Samsung Electronics (Samsung) have signed a non-binding preliminary memorandum of terms (PMT) to provide up to \$6.4 billion in direct funding under the CHIPS and Science Act to strengthen the resilience of the U.S. semiconductor supply chain, advance U.S. technology leadership, and fuel U.S. global competitiveness. Samsung – the only leading-edge semiconductor company that is a leader in both advanced memory and advanced logic technologies – is expected to invest more than \$40 billion dollars in the region in the coming years, and the proposed investment would support the creation of over 20,000 jobs.

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

### **U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo Announces Expansion of U.S. AI Safety Institute Leadership Team**

On Tuesday, April 16, U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo announced additional members of the executive leadership team of the U.S. AI Safety Institute (AIS), which is housed at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). Raimondo named Paul Christiano as Head of AI Safety, Adam Russell as Chief Vision Officer, Mara Campbell as Acting Chief Operating Officer and Chief of Staff, Rob Reich as Senior Advisor, and Mark Latonero as Head of International Engagement. They will join AISI Director Elizabeth Kelly and Chief Technology Officer Elham Tabassi, who were announced in February. The AISI was established within NIST at the direction of President Biden, including to support the responsibilities assigned to the Department of Commerce under the President's landmark Executive Order.

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

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## Fast Fact

*According to a [recent report](#) by MetLife, Gen Zers are the least happy employees of any generation — with only 62% of surveyed Gen Z workers reporting being happy with their job, compared with 67% of boomers, 66% of Generation X, and 66% of millennials. According to the report, a main reason for the lower happiness rate is a gap between their strong desire to find professional purpose and their satisfaction with this aspect of their work.*



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