Student Loan Forgiveness

On Wednesday, August 24, President Joe Biden announced an unprecedented student loan forgiveness plan that would be implemented through executive action and provide up to $20,000 in federal student loan cancellation for up to 20 million borrowers. President Biden said he would cancel up to $10,000 in federal student loan debt for borrowers who earn less than $125,000 per year, or under $250,000 for married couples who file jointly. Individuals who receive Pell grants could obtain as much as $20,000 in loan forgiveness. The move was criticized by many conservatives but Biden defended the policy saying it is designed to help the neediest borrowers — the White House estimates that nearly 90 percent of relief will go to people earning less than $75,000 and that roughly 20 million borrowers could have their debt completely canceled. The debt forgiveness applies to loans that originated on or before June 30, which could offer relief to some current college students — if their household income was under $250,000 during the last federal student aid award year — as well as borrowers with much older debt.
The executive order could face legal opposition and on Wednesday, August 24, the Biden administration released a legal opinion asserting that the Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students Act gives the education secretary the “authority to reduce or eliminate the obligation to repay the principal balance of federal student loan debt.” President Biden is also extending the pandemic-era pause on federal student loan payments through December 31 and proposed creating a new income-based repayment plan to lower monthly bills for undergraduate borrowers.

This month, Congresswoman Virginia Foxx (NC) led a group of congressional Republicans in releasing an alternative to Biden’s blanket debt-forgiveness plans that would establish new borrowing limits, reduce interest and simplify repayment options while ending popular loan-cancellation programs. It also calls for an end to the suspension of federal student loan payments.

Click here to access the White House fact sheet on the student debt relief.

Click here to read more about the Republican student debt forgiveness plan.

**COLLEGE Act**

On Monday, August 22, Senator Rick Scott (FL) introduced the legislation Changing Our Learning, Loans, Endowments, and Graduation Expectations (COLLEGE) Act that aims to increase accountability among colleges by making schools responsible for paying back some of their students’ loans if they default. The legislation includes several other proposals such as requiring the Education Department to post “common sense” data for public colleges and universities such as 6-year graduation rates, cost to graduate, and job or advanced degree placement. It attempts to put higher education institutions on the hook for student debt by tying schools to the debt of their students. Under the bill, a school would be responsible for paying 1 percent of the loan balance of any students in default within the first three years when their loans have entered repayment. That rate jumps to 2 percent in year two and raises to 10 percent of the balance after a decade. Senator Scott hopes forcing universities to have accountability for student debt provides incentive to actually prepare students for careers. It also calls on schools to create new federal cost-match financial aid awards based on the size and growth of their endowment funds. It would require the Department of Education to collect and report a host of metrics on how schools and their students perform. Scott says that keeping track of this data would bolster accountability in higher education and ensure that college leaders are doing their jobs.

Click here to read more on the legislation.

**Initial Jobless Claims**
In the week ending August 20, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims was 243,000, a decrease of 2,000 from the previous week's revised level. The previous week's level was revised down by 5,000 from 250,000 to 245,000. The 4-week moving average was 247,000, an increase of 1,500 from the previous week's revised average. The previous week's average was revised down by 1,250 from 246,750 to 245,500. The advance seasonally adjusted insured unemployment rate was 1.0 percent for the week ending August 13, unchanged from the previous week's unrevised rate.

Click here to access the report.

DOL/ETA

U.S. Department of Labor Announces $3.4 Million in Grants to Expand Job Opportunities for Women in Apprenticeships, Nontraditional Occupations

On Wednesday, August 24, the U.S. Department of Labor announced the award of $3.4 million in funding to help recruit, train and retain more women in quality pre-apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship programs, as well as nontraditional occupations. Administered by the department’s Women’s Bureau and Employment and Training Administration (ETA), the Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations grants will support organizations in Arizona, Illinois, New York, Virginia and Washington.

WANTO grants support women’s participation in fields in which they have traditionally been underrepresented, such as finance, technology, construction, manufacturing, energy and transportation. A portion of the grants will provide support services such as childcare, transportation, tuition and work-related gear.

Click here to access the full press release.

Department of Labor Awards $50 Million in Additional Grants to Fund Registered Apprenticeship Hubs to Expand Apprenticeships

On Wednesday, August 24, the U.S. Department of Labor announced the award of $50 million in Apprenticeship Building America grant funding for Registered Apprenticeship hubs – organizations that help employers design, develop and deliver programs – and support the establishment, scaling and expansion of Registered Apprenticeship programs in new and fast-growing industries and occupations. The program advances the department’s efforts to expand, diversify and modernize Registered Apprenticeship by increasing the number of programs and apprentices, diversifying the industries that use the “earn-as-you-learn” model for workforce development, and improving the access and performance of the programs in underrepresented and underserved communities.
The department is awarding the grants to nine organizations in California, Illinois, Michigan, New Hampshire, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Washington.

With the announcement, the department has awarded $171 million to fund 39 grantees, including more than $78 million focused on equity and partnerships as well as pre-apprenticeship activities. Apprenticeship Building America grant recipients will incorporate cross-cutting principles to ensure access to quality Registered Apprenticeship Programs. These principles include equity, job quality, sustainability, evidence-based approaches and new opportunities for innovation, engagement and ease of access.

Click here to read the full press release.

USCM WDC/DOL SEED Partnership

Disability Employment Issues Highlighted by National Black Caucus of State Legislators

The National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL), a partner of ODEP’s State Exchange on Employment & Disability (SEED), recently published an op-ed by Georgia State Rep. Kim Schofield highlighting the 32nd anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and her collaboration with SEED to advance inclusive workforce policies in her state. The op-ed, “Inclusive Intersections: Why Disability Rights are Civil Rights,” discusses Rep. Schofield’s recent resolution recognizing National Disability Employment Awareness Month and the ADA, as well as telework as an inclusive workforce strategy.

Click here to access the op-ed.

Upcoming Meeting

The U.S. Conference of Mayors Workforce Development Council (WDC) Board Meeting & 33rd Annual Congressional Forum

September 22-23, 2022
New Orleans, LA

The U.S. Conference of Mayors Workforce Development Council (USCM WDC) Board Meeting & 33rd Annual Congressional Forum will be held from September 22-23, 2022.
in New Orleans, LA. The Meeting and Forum are in-person and **day one** will take place at The Windsor Court Hotel (300 Gravier Street; New Orleans, LA 70130) and **day two** taking place at Gallier Hall (545 Charles Ave; New Orleans, LA 70130).

[Click here](#) to access a skeleton agenda.

[Click here](#) to register for the upcoming **WDC Board Meeting & 33rd Annual Congressional Forum**. **Once registered, you will be able to book your hotel room through this link as well.**

If you have any issues registering for the meeting or have any questions, please contact Kevin Verge at [kverge@usmayors.org](mailto:kverge@usmayors.org).

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**WDC in the News**

**How Companies are Using Innovative Technology to Improve On-the-Job Training**

Since the dawn of time, methods have existed for training employees to perform new or unfamiliar tasks. From facilitating mentorship between highly competent colleagues and other employees to developing user manuals for technical skills, most companies already have the resources necessary to train their workforce. But the question arises: Why are companies now choosing to develop new-era on-the-job training programs?

Adaptability is crucial in the modern business world. New platforms, markets and technologies appear to emerge every quarter, making each new venture risky, because the environment is susceptible to change at any moment. A rise in the number of employees working remotely or through a hybrid model has necessitated these rapid changes in the workplace and industries. Even if a company can adjust its goals and strategy to accommodate these changes, it is an entirely different challenge to ensure that its employees have the skills necessary to adapt rapidly.

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

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**Reports & Articles**

**New from NYEC**

**Identifying Gaps in Youth Employment Programs’ Capacity to Address Mental Health Needs**

On Tuesday, August 23, NYEC released its report “Identifying Gaps in Youth Employment
Programs’ Capacity to Address Youth Mental Health Needs.” The National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC), in partnership with its member agencies, youth providers, academic institutions, and other partners, deployed a national survey in March 2022 to understand the readiness of youth programs across the US to respond to the youth mental health crisis; the processes and systems providers have in place to fight the crisis; and what supports they need to combat this ongoing, life-threatening challenge.

This nationwide survey and report received responses from 564 organizations across 49 of the 50 states along with 3 focus groups comprised of the youth that the respondents serve. This report identifies the many challenges practitioners face on micro and macro levels, insights into what young people are experiencing, and the types of interventions and support that are needed. The report found that most youth employment programs indicated that their youth cannot access mental health services when they need them with 60% of respondents estimating that fewer than half the youth could access mental health support in their community when needed.

Click here to access the report.

**New from Brookings**

**New Data Shows Long Covid is Keeping As Many As 4 Million People Out of Work**

Since the depths of the COVID-19 pandemic through today, news about labor shortages and missing workers has dominated headlines. The question everyone still seems to be asking is: Why? In January 2022, Brookings Metro published a report that assessed the impact of long COVID on the labor market. Data on the condition’s prevalence was limited, so the report used various studies to make a conservative estimate: 1.6 million full-time equivalent workers would be out of work due to long COVID. With 10.6 million unfilled jobs at the time, long Covid potentially accounted for 15% of the labor shortage.

This June, the Census Bureau finally added four questions about long Covid to its Household Pulse Survey (HPS), giving researchers a better understanding of the condition’s prevalence. This report uses the new data to assess the labor market impact and economic burden of long Covid, and finds that around 16 million working-age Americans (those aged 18 to 65) have long Covid today. Of those, 2 to 4 million are out of work due to long Covid. The annual cost of those lost wages alone is around $170 billion a year and potentially as high as $230 billion. These impacts stand to worsen over time if the U.S. does not take the necessary policy actions. With that in mind, the final section of this report identifies five critical interventions to mitigate both the economic costs and household financial impact of long Covid.

Click here to access the full report.
New from CLASP

House WIOA Reauthorization Makes Important Strides, But Additional Improvements Needed

On May 17, 2022, the House of Representatives passed a reauthorization of the Workforce and Opportunity Act (H.R. 7309). First enacted in 2014, WIOA is the primary law governing the public workforce system—the myriad of policies and programs that aim to assist jobseekers with education and training opportunities; labor market information; career navigation; and other work-related support services.

Reauthorization is an opportunity to reform the workforce system to better serve unemployed and underemployed workers—especially Black, Indigenous, and Latinx workers, as well as immigrants, youth, and individuals impacted by the criminal legal system. Data indicates that these communities experience challenges accessing and benefiting from the current workforce system. Moreover, the system is actually reinforcing and replicating systemic racism and sexism in the labor market by steering workers of color into low-wage jobs. As the country continues to recover from a devastating pandemic and economic recession, it is critical that the workforce system creates training and development opportunities that help workers of color enter into quality, family sustaining jobs. This brief describes some of the critical updates the House bill makes to WIOA. It also offers CLASP’s recommendations for Congress to build toward a workforce system that empowers workers and helps create broadly shared prosperity.

Click here to access the full report.

Fast Fact

According to a recent NYEC report, anxiety and depression are the most observed mental health conditions among youth. 93% of all respondents stated that they have “observed” anxiety amongst youth, while 90% of respondents stated they “observed” depression.