



## WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

October 28, 2024

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# Washington Update

## House Education and the Workforce Committee

On Friday, October 25, House Education and the Workforce Committee Chair Virginia Foxx (NC) sent a letter to Acting Secretary of Labor Julie Su criticizing her for continuing to ignore an oversight request regarding Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data. In September, the Committee sent an oversight request regarding the Department of Labor's (DOL's) BLS August release, which revealed the U.S. economy had created 800,000 fewer jobs in the twelve months through March than the administration had claimed. The report was posted approximately 30 minutes late with several Wall Street investment firms gaining access to the report details 15 minutes before the public.

Foxx, along with Committee Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions Chair Bob Good (VA) issued an oversight request following the incident, which the DOL failed to respond to. In their most recent letter, Foxx and Good demand DOL provide "any written complaints received by DOL regarding the release of the job numbers on August 21" and renew their September request that all documents shared with "an entity or individual outside of BLS in advance of their public release" be shared with the Committee.

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

## **Migrant Worker Permits**

On Tuesday, October 22, Congressional Democrats sent a letter to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Director Ur Jaddou urging DHS to process Employment Authorizations Documents (EADs) by the end of the year. The letter states there is a backlog of 1.4 million EADs awaiting processing and urges DHS to provide additional resources to clear the backlog. The letter also urges DHS to finalize and make permanent a rule allowing for an automatic extension period for expired work permits of 540 days, and perhaps make that grace period as long as 730 days.

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

## **Apprenticeships**

White House Domestic Policy Adviser Neera Tanden is calling for increased participation of high school and community college students in apprenticeship programs to equip them with the skills needed for jobs created by the CHIPS and Science Act and the Inflation Reduction Act. On Monday, October 21, while speaking at a Semafor conference focused on strengthening U.S. manufacturing, Tanden emphasized the importance of exposing students to tech-based skills early on. During a recent trip to Detroit, Tanden explored local initiatives aimed at building manufacturing and cyber skills among high school students. These efforts align with the broader goal of ensuring the next generation is prepared to fill the high-tech jobs driving the future of American industry.

## **Clean Energy Workforce Development**

On Thursday, October 24, the U.S. Department of Energy's (DEO) Office of State and Community Energy Programs (SCEP) announced its first round of selectees through the Energy Auditor Training (EAT) grant program. Funded under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), the program will distribute up to \$27.98 million in Investing in America agenda funding for clean energy workforce development.

The program is initially allocating funds to 15 State Energy Offices (SEOs) and the American Samoa Territorial Energy Office (TEO) to "increase the green building workforce across the country and support the implementation of national energy efficiency improvements sparked by BIL and the Inflation Reduction Act," according to the DOE. Specifically, the funding aims to expand opportunities for energy savings. "EAT will ensure that commercial and residential building energy auditors identify ways to reduce energy

usage, promote efficiency, and provide energy-saving solutions to homes and businesses as the nation transitions to a more sustainable future.”

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

## Initial Jobless Claims

In the week ending October 19, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims was 227,000, a decrease of 15,000 from the previous week's revised level. The previous week's level was revised up by 1,000 from 241,000 to 242,000. The 4-week moving average was 238,500, an increase of 2,000 from the previous week's revised average. The previous week's average was revised up by 250 from 236,250 to 236,500. The advance seasonally adjusted insured unemployment rate was 1.3 percent for the week ending October 12, an increase of 0.1 percentage point from the previous week's unrevised rate.

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

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# New from DOL/ETA

## Virtual Event – Families and Caregivers at the Center: Policies that Support and Drive Economic Opportunity

On October 29<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 pm ET, join the U.S Department of Labor and Ascend at the Aspen Institute for a special conversation, Families and Caregivers at the Center: Policies that Support Parents and Drive Economic Opportunity. As recently highlighted by the Department of Labor's report *Child Care is Infrastructure*, paid care work is a crucial foundation for the economy because it allows working parents and other caregivers to become and remain employed. When child care becomes inaccessible, labor force participation drops, with mothers experiencing the most negative effects.

In their conversation about this timely topic, Acting Secretary Su and Anne Mosle will draw on learnings from *Ascending with Parents: A Guide to Centering Parent Voice in Policy and Practice* and the Department of Labor's research and insights, followed by closing remarks by Jennifer Klein, Director of the White House Gender Policy Council. How does uplifting caregivers and parents impact our wider workforce? What are the higher-level economic and social ramifications of policies that center families? What are the concrete programs we need to implement to make a real difference at a national, state, and local level?

[Click here](#) to register for the event.

## State Employment and Unemployment Summary

On Tuesday, October 22, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) released the September 2024 State Employment and Unemployment Summary. The report showed that in September, unemployment rates were higher in 5 states, lower in 1 state, and stable in 44 states and the District of Columbia. Nonfarm payroll employment increased in 5 states and the District and was essentially unchanged in 45 states.

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

## **Grants are Funding Life-Changing Improvements for Workers**

Getting ahead is not easy. And for Kimberly Rush, the difference was a debit card for buying gas. She was at the end of more than two decades working in restaurants and food service, roles that significantly changed when she had to isolate during the pandemic because of treatments for leukemia. She did not have paid time off or sick leave. “I worked every single weekend, every single holiday there was,” she said. That made it hard to split time among her oncology appointments, her job at a Safeway deli, and a cable-wiring program at Mesa Community College in Phoenix, a 45-minute drive from where she lived.

The cost of making a change through workforce training was high, and not only in dollars and cents. Once, she slept in her car to fit in some rest around a doctor’s appointment, work and class. She put icepacks in an airplane pillow to help her with the desert heat. “I found myself just going on empty, physically, spiritually, emotionally,” Kimberly said. Every step forward was heavy, but she had help making each one because her training was through Fresh Start Women’s Foundation, a Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations (WANTO) program grantee.

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

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# **WDC in the News**

## **JCPS Students Gain Insight into Future Careers Through Academies of Louisville Programs**

Seneca seniors Karisha Bastola and Ben Williams stood at the front of their classroom on a recent morning, quizzing underclassmen on the names of bones that formed "Sheldon the Skeleton" standing next to them. Dressed in red scrubs, the pair cheered the younger students on as each correct answer rang out. Their excitement for the health field and to share their knowledge was apparent; both realized a few years ago what they learned through the school's health science academy was going to have a direct impact on their futures. Bastola and Williams will leave high school with multiple certifications and Bastola

is already working at a nursing home, gaining in the field experience before she pursues medical school to become an OBGYN.

Williams' doesn't plan to go into health care but when he looked at Seneca's different offerings, he decided health science would give him much of the foundational medical training he'll need as a firefighter. Once he turns 18, he plans to use the knowledge Seneca provided to become a phlebotomist so he can earn money while going through the firefighter academy.

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

## **Labor Department's AI Roadmap Geared Toward 'Worker Empowerment'**

The Department of Labor is spelling out how artificial intelligence can boost job quality without harming the rights of workers, releasing a roadmap this week that aims to empower workforces in underserved communities as use of the emerging technology proliferates. The 17-page document, titled "Artificial Intelligence and Worker Well-Being: Principles and Best Practices for Developers and Employers," details eight key priorities for AI companies and management to follow that are intended to keep the focus on "centering worker empowerment and well-being."

"We have a shared responsibility to ensure that AI is used to expand equality, advance equity, develop opportunity and improve job quality," Acting Secretary of Labor Julie Su said in a statement. "These Best Practices provide a roadmap for responsible AI in the workplace, helping businesses harness these technologies while proactively supporting and valuing their workers. As we embrace the opportunities that AI can offer, we must ensure workers are lifted up, not left behind."

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

## **NYC Signed \$300 Million Deal with Energy Start-Up for Job Training, But Doesn't Know if it Worked**

A \$300 million initiative that combined job training with anti-violence campaigns was shut down earlier this year because New York City officials say they don't know how many people participated or found work thanks to the program.

The city's contracts with BlocPower, which finances and installs electric appliances and other energy-efficient upgrades to homes and buildings, have received little public attention beyond mostly positive coverage about the jobs program and the company's founding CEO, Donnel Baird, a former campaign director for President Barack Obama. But behind the scenes, a financial dispute has arisen between the city's youth services and criminal justice agencies, BlocPower, and subcontractors who say they haven't been paid in

months. City officials say they have no idea how many people enrolled in the program, how many graduated, nor whether they received jobs in the green energy industry.

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

## **Politico Pro Q&A: Representative Burgess Owens**

Rep. Burgess Owens likes to say he came to Congress with plans to make education his legacy. Now, the two-term Utah Republican may get that chance. Owens is vying for the top spot on the House Education and the Workforce Committee against veteran Rep. Tim Walberg (R-Mich.) as Virginia Foxx (R-N.C.), the current chair, ends an extended term.

The race is more competitive than usual and Owens argues his record on the committee — he's the higher education subcommittee chair — should earn him the gavel. He led a damning hearing this September against the Education Department and its disastrous rollout of a key financial aid form. And he has played a leading role in House Republican efforts to tackle antisemitism on college campuses. (A front-page article from Harvard University's newspaper about the resignation of former Harvard President Claudine Gay hangs on his office wall.)

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

## **Community Colleges Emerge as Key Players in 'Good Jobs Challenge'**

The federally funded Good Jobs Challenge launched amid the pandemic with \$500M in grants and a topline goal of helping 50K Americans break into jobs that were both in-demand and could sustain a family. It was one of the earliest in a series of initiatives by the Biden administration that have paired economic recovery for communities with economic advancement for individuals.

Now two years in, nearly 30K people have enrolled in job training through the Good Jobs Challenge, with 8,700 already placed into "good jobs." According to data reported by the grantees, most are making at least \$15 an hour—nearly double what the median wage was for participants before entering the program. Some are earning more than \$40 an hour in industries like construction, IT, cybersecurity, and forestry.

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

## **Bipartisan Alignment Around Workforce Training: Key Podcast**

The partisan divide in the U.S. seems unbridgeable at times, and many issues in higher education are deeply dividing politicians. But with the 2024 election just days away, there's

a remarkable amount of alignment around the importance of workforce development and training and how to strengthen it.

A new episode of The Key, *Inside Higher Ed's* news and analysis podcast, explores the relative consensus between the parties and its implications. Joining the discussion are Amanda Winters, program director for postsecondary education at the National Governors Association, and Michelle Van Noy, director of the Education and Employment Research Center at Rutgers University's School of Management and Labor Relations. They examine how this alignment around workforce training is affecting policy development at the state and federal levels, and how November's election might change what happens in the next few years, if at all.

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

## Why Are Companies Prioritizing Tech Over Human Skills

While human skills like adaptability, leadership, and communication overwhelmingly scored as vital in a new Deloitte survey, one in three employees say they have limited or no human skills training at their place of work. As workplaces tend to emphasize short-term training on new technology, there's evidence that the human side of workforce development may be lacking. In the survey, nearly all respondents said human skills are timeless, and close to 90% said human skills help them get ahead.

Yet, technology is where a lot of firms are investing in their employees. Deloitte's Anthony Stephan said, "The future is dependent on a very clearly defined 'yes and' strategy. Yes, we must invest in tech, technical skills to continue to allow our people to create differentiated opportunity in the marketplace. And yes, we need to invest in human skills."

Even though human skills have been getting more attention over the years, many organizations are holding back. "I think a lot of it is time and budget," said Claudia Magallan, a workforce development expert in Texas. "Especially when you're working for small agencies or nonprofit agencies, you have to do as much as you can with a budget you have. How do you get people you know out of a classroom or away from cases and stuff like that, to attend a training ... it has to be very calculated."

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

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# Reports & Articles

## New from New America

### [Better Together: Worker Rights and Workforce Development](#)

Should the federal government provide subsidies to companies that violate labor laws? Should our workforce development system educate workers and job seekers about their legal rights? These two questions are at the heart of the current impasse around the reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the country's largest job training and employment program. Senate Democrats have introduced a provision into a reauthorization proposal that would require employers seeking public funding for training to disclose any recent violations of federal labor laws. Business lobbyists and Senate Republicans have pushed back against the provision, refusing to move forward with the reauthorization effort until the provision is removed entirely. On Tuesday, October 29th at 3:00 ET New American will host a webinar discussion on why worker rights have made their way into the WIOA reauthorization process—and why they should remain there. The discussion will center around a new Good Jobs Collaborative brief by Alí R. Bustamante and new curriculum on workforce development from the University of Illinois.

[Click here](#) to register for the webinar.

## **New from National Council for Mental Wellbeing**

### **Workforce Solutions Jam: Addressing the Workforce Shortage Through Policy Change**

On Tuesday, November 19, the National Council for Mental Wellbeing will host the virtual event “Addressing the Workforce Shortage Through Policy Change: Translating Innovative Policy Solutions Into Action.” The focus of this session will be on innovative policy solutions at the federal and state level aimed at addressing the workforce crisis.

In September, The Kennedy Forum release a report titled, Building the Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Workforce We Need, which examines the extent of the shortage and provides guidance for policymakers on payment and reimbursement, licensure and standardization, education and training, and data and technology. Representatives from The Kennedy Forum's workforce committee will share highlights of the report, followed by a dialogue with state leaders implementing promising strategies aligned with the report.

[Click here](#) to register for the webinar.

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## **Fast Fact**

***A recent Deloitte survey found 87% of workers see human skills like adaptability, leadership, and communications as integral to their career advancement. 94% of***



*respondents are concerned that future generations will enter the workforce without the necessary human skills.*



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