

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

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Strengthening Cities Through
Workforce Development



THE U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

October 13, 2026



Appropriations

On Tuesday, October 6, Senator Mazie Hirono's (HI) office began soliciting ideas for FY28 earmarks ahead of formal guidance from the Senate Appropriations Committee. Although the committee is not expected to issue its FY28 guidance for several months, Hirono's office is encouraging organizations and local governments seeking federal funding to share potential requests early. The office noted that its guidance remains preliminary until committee-wide instructions are available but said early outreach would allow staff to provide feedback and answer questions before the formal appropriations process begins.

Both the House and Senate have officially adjourned for recess and are set to return to Washington for full legislative sessions on Monday, November 9.

House Education and Workforce Committee Leadership

On Tuesday, October 6, Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamini (OR) sent a Dear Colleague letter to members of the Democratic Caucus that declared her intent to run for chair of the House Education and Workforce Committee, should her party take the House after primaries.

Current Committee Ranking Member, and past Chair, Congressman Bobby Scott (VA) and Congresswoman Jahana Hayes (CT) are also running for the top spot. Bonamici currently serves as Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education and has previously introduced a resolution to impeach the Secretary of

Education Linda McMahon because of her efforts to dismantle the agency without congressional approval.

Department of Homeland Security

On Wednesday, October 7, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) proposed requiring colleges to pay \$70,000 for each international student seeking Optional Practical Training (OPT) authorization and \$30,000 for program extensions. OPT allows international students to work in jobs related to their fields of study during or after their academic programs. Most students are eligible for up to one year of post-graduation work authorization, while graduates in certain science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields may qualify for an additional two years. The proposed fees represent a sharp increase from the roughly \$500 students have typically paid themselves.

DHS said the proposal is intended to deter fraud and require colleges to exercise greater oversight when recommending students for OPT. Higher education advocates warned that the proposal could further discourage international enrollment and affect colleges' finances. International students often pay full tuition and provide a significant source of revenue for colleges and universities, helping support institutional budgets, financial aid and services for domestic students. There are also fears that the proposal could weaken the OPT program and the nation's talent pipeline amid intensifying global competition for economic leadership.

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



Keith Sonderling Sworn in as 31st US Secretary of Labor

Sonderling has led the U.S. Department of Labor as Acting Secretary since April 2026. He previously served as Deputy Secretary of Labor after confirmation by the U.S. Senate in March 2025. President Donald J. Trump announced Sonderling's nomination on June 29, and the Senate confirmed the nomination Sept. 30. Sonderling was officially sworn into office Oct. 2.

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

Initial Jobless Claims

In the week ending October 3, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims was

197,000, a decrease of 2,000 from the previous week's revised level. The previous week's level was revised up by 2,000 from 197,000 to 199,000. The 4-week moving average was 198,000, a decrease of 2,500 from the previous week's revised average.

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



Worker Empowerment Cabinet Brings Workforce Leaders Together for 3rd Annual Workforce Innovation Symposium

Last month, Chief Trinh Nguyen and the City of Boston's Worker Empowerment Cabinet hosted the 2026 Workforce Innovation Symposium. The convening brought together workforce leaders, government officials, educators, technology partners, and youth-focused organizations from across the country to share promising practices and explore innovative approaches to youth employment, artificial intelligence, public-sector talent development, registered apprenticeships, career pathways, and economic mobility.

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

New Ways to Work Pre-Apprenticeship Guide & Toolkit

A pre-apprenticeship is a workforce preparation program designed to help individuals gain the skills, experience, and support they need to successfully enter and complete a Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP). Think of it as an on-ramp. Pre-apprenticeship doesn't replace apprenticeship—it prepares people for it. Typical programs run somewhere between 6 and 20 weeks and serve cohorts of 10 to 25 participants, though this varies by sector and region. This guide is designed for a broad range of partners who play complementary roles in apprenticeship systems, including but not limited to: Educators & Education Agencies; Employers & Apprenticeship Sponsors; Intermediaries; Workforce Development Boards (WDBs); and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).

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

Shapiro Administration Invests \$6.74 Million to Launch New Program Supporting Advanced Shipbuilding and Maritime Manufacturing Workforce in Pennsylvania

On Wednesday, October 7, the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) announced its new Advanced Shipbuilding and Maritime Manufacturing Program, a unique initiative that

will partner with industry employers to provide tailored skills training to current or new workers. L&I will implement and lead the program, made possible thanks to a \$6.74 million investment from the Industry-Driven Skills Training Fund Grant – a US Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration grant program that supports employer-driven training in high growth sectors like advanced manufacturing, AI infrastructure, shipbuilding, nuclear energy, and IT.

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

The Race Our Nation Can't Afford to Lose, Plus a New Commitment from Us and a Fresh Set of Community Investments

Amazon Web Services CEO Matt Garman announced an Amazon commitment to spend an additional \$1B over five years to back free community college and hands-on workforce training for residents of communities where its data centers are located. AWS is establishing agreements with community colleges and plans to launch the program in the next few months, with a goal of connecting 300K+ students to “free degree access.”

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

New Global Workforce Report: 5 Takeaways Leaders Can Act on Now

Today's labor market is sending mixed signals. As AI adoption, new skill demands, and organizational restructuring drive significant change at both the organizational and employee levels, broader indicators of workforce growth are stalling. Workday's latest Global Workforce Report, The Adaptability Advantage, underscores both sides of that tension. While employees are being asked to adapt to evolving role demands and expectations, new opportunities—both internal and external—are becoming harder to find.

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



New from Aspen Institute

Employee Ownership: An Economic and Workforce Development Strategy for State and Local Governments

In 2018 the President heralded Foxconn's plans for a new manufacturing plant in southeast Wisconsin as "the eighth wonder of the world." Nearly seven years and over \$1 billion in tax

breaks and subsidies later, only 1,200 jobs have materialized out of the 13,000 the company promised. Gone are the company's plans for a major manufacturing facility. Today, a small facility comparable to a storage warehouse on land obtained through eminent domain and handed to the company is all that stands. To add insult to injury, Foxconn recently sold part of the property it was gifted to Microsoft for \$100 million.

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

New from Education First

Pathways Policies that Work: Practical Advice for Policymakers

This series of policy briefs provides practical advice to senior state policymakers—especially governors and leaders of state education and workforce systems—about how to better connect K12 education, postsecondary education and workforce systems to create pathways to economic mobility for all students.

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

New from Brookings

A Direct Care Worker Visa Policy to Support the Aging U.S. Population

Over 20 million adults in the U.S. need long-term care or support in daily activities due to disabilities or other functional limitations associated with aging. Direct care workers—including home health aides, personal care aides, and nursing assistants—can provide these services in institutional settings or at home. In recent years, and exacerbated by the pandemic, growth in these professions has been constrained by low recruitment and retention, largely reflecting poor job quality and low wages.

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



Fact of the Week

According to the recently released Western Governors University report "Workforce Decoded 2026," 60% of U.S. hiring professionals say AI has made it more difficult to evaluate candidates' actual skills. The share of employers still determining how to assess AI skills

effectively doubled from 16% in 2025 to 32% in 2026, as organizations invest in AI tools and workers face growing pressure to adapt.

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



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