

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

Strengthening Cities Through
Workforce Development



THE U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

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Department of Labor

On Monday, March 9, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA) released guidance on the Registered Apprenticeship system that intends to make programs more flexible and attractive to employers. The DOL ETA said it is committed to responding to applications for new apprenticeship programs within 30 days and will provide greater transparency around registration timelines through a public website that tracks processing performance.

The guidance aims to reduce administrative burdens and provide clearer direction for apprenticeship sponsors designing programs that meet workforce needs. It encourages the use of competency-based, time-based, or hybrid program structures — reflecting a broader shift toward more flexible training models. Additional ETA guidance clarifies the roles of state apprenticeship agencies and councils and outlines how apprenticeship program completion rates are determined and reported. ETA also launched an online portal that publishes completion-rate data and other performance information.

Additionally, the Department is preparing a pilot “pay for performance” grant program intended to direct funding toward apprenticeship programs that demonstrate strong outcomes. The Administration has set a goal of reaching 1 million active apprentices nationwide. As of FY25, there were slightly more than 700,000 active apprentices.

Some apprenticeship advocates support efforts to increase employer participation and streamline program approvals but have raised concerns that reducing minimum training

thresholds could affect program stands. The changes come as some stakeholders call for broader updates to the National Apprenticeship Act to modernize the system.

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

Economy of the Future Commission Act

On Wednesday, March 11, Senators Mark Warner (VA) and Mike Rounds (SD) introduced the bipartisan legislation, Economy of the Future Commission Act, which aims to help American workers adapt to the rapid economic and workforce changes driven by artificial intelligence (AI). The bill establishes a commission to provide lawmakers with recommendations on workforce training, reskilling, and strategies to maintain U.S. competitiveness in an AI-driven economy.

The commission would include bipartisan members of Congress and experts from industry, academia, and government agencies focused on education, labor, commerce, and economic policy. Within seven months of enactment, the bill would issue an interim report outlining expected employment changes and public resources on AI with a final report due within 13 months. The final report would provide legislative recommendations on AI education, workforce training, reskilling, unemployment insurance, taxation, and strategies to maintain leadership in technology and manufacturing sectors.

[Click here](#) to access the full press release and full text of the bill.

GAO Report

On Wednesday, March 11, the U.S. Department of Government Accountability (GAO) released the report "Federal Student Loans: Education Needs to Address Gaps in Servicer Oversight," which found that the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) stopped key oversight of federal student loan services in February 2025. It found that FSA halted reviews of servicer records and borrow calls, raising risks that borrowers could face incorrect repayment plans, wrong charges, or delayed refunds. GAO linked the cutbacks to staffing reductions at FSA, which fell nearly 50% in 2025. While FSA cited alternative oversight like borrower surveys, GAO said these do not ensure accurate information.

Additionally, GAO agreed to review the transfer of career and technical education and adult education grant programs from the U.S. Department of Education to the U.S. Department of Labor. The review follows a request from Senators Elizabeth Warren (MA), Bernie Sanders (VT), Patty Murray (WA), and Tammy Baldwin (WI) for the investigation. GAO has not yet set a timeline for this review.

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

Bipartisan Policy Center Report

On Wednesday, March 11, the Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC) released a report outlining a national strategy to better align education, workforce development, and economic policy as artificial intelligence and other economic shifts reshape labor market demands. The report, developed by the BPC's Commission on the American Workforce, calls for a more coordinated

federal approach to talent development and greater alignment among government agencies, employers, and education systems.

A central recommendation is the creation of a federal Talent Advisory Council, modeled on cross-agency coordinating bodies such as the National Security Council, to help coordinate workforce and education initiatives across the federal government. It also proposes establishing a national Talent Data System to track learner and worker outcomes from K-12 education through employment, with the goal of improving program coordination and helping students, workers, and employers better understand career pathways and labor market needs.

It outlines three priorities: building a national talent strategy that supports state and local leaders, redesigning education and training systems around learner and worker needs, and strengthening benefits and supports that enable workforce participation. Recommendations include expanding pathways such as apprenticeships and short-term credentials, improving career navigation tools, strengthening the teacher workforce, and addressing barriers to work, including child care access, paid family and medical leave, and retirement coverage.

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



U.S. Department of Labor Selects Participants for National Effort to Expand Employment Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities

On Tuesday, March 10, the U.S. Department of Labor announced Colorado, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, New York, Tennessee, and the District of Columbia will participate as “core states” in fiscal year 2026 in its National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network initiative.

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

Secretary Chavez-DeRemer Completes 50-State ‘America at Work’ Listening Tour in First Year as Labor Secretary

On Monday, March 9, U.S. Secretary of Labor Lori Chavez-DeRemer completed her “America at Work” listening tour with a visit to Tulsa, Oklahoma. One year ago, Secretary Chavez-DeRemer set out to meet with workers and employers in all 50 states and committed to bring their stories back to Washington to shape federal labor policies and practices.

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

Initial Jobless Claims

In the week ending March 7, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims was 213,000, a decrease of 1,000 from the previous week's revised level. The previous week's level was revised up by 1,000 from 213,000 to 214,000.

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



NABTU & OpenAI Join Forces to Train the Next Generation of Skilled Construction Workers

On Wednesday, March 11, Sean McGarvey, President of North America's Building Trades Unions ("NABTU") joined Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, to announce a new collaboration to help support and expand training pathways into the skilled construction trades. OpenAI and NABTU will work together to help ensure that the construction of AI-related infrastructure supports union careers, strengthens union-registered apprenticeship programs, and creates economic opportunity in the communities where this infrastructure is built.

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

Semiconductor Investments are Changing Regional Workforce Development Systems. Can They Be Transformational?

This is the opening installment of a series of issue briefs presenting regional workforce training responses in four regions across the United States—the sites of some of the nation's largest semiconductor company investments. The briefs detail innovation and programmatic changes in the regions' workforce training ecosystems and are based on extensive field work. That research followed passage of the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022, which authorized \$25B in federal spending. State-level funds and roughly \$500B in private-sector investments were layered with the federal investment.

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

Cities Get a Helping Hand to Attract More Workers to the Public Sector

State and local governments have made strides in recent years to plug vacant or hard to fill job positions, but persistent staffing shortages still threaten the quality of government service delivery.

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

To Address Farm Labor Shortage, Trump Administration Turns to Migrant Workers

For years, the agricultural sector has faced a tight labor market as farmworkers age and fewer new immigrants and younger Americans are willing to toil in the fields. Top Trump administration officials vowed that mass deportations would help, leading to “higher wages with better benefits” and a “100 percent American workforce.”

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



New from Aspen Institute

Reimagining Workforce and Economic Development in the South

On Wednesday, April 2, from 2:00 - 3:15 pm (ET) the Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program will host a virtual conversation on how the Institute’s Job Quality Fellows are embedding job quality into their work across a range of contexts and strategies — from employee ownership models that give workers a direct financial stake in their company's success, to apprenticeship programs that create structured pathways to higher-wage careers, to worker advisory committees that bring employee voice into business decision-making.

[Click here](#) to learn more and register.



Fact of the Week

A February 2026 report from the National Institute on Retirement Security (NIRS) found that the median American worker has only \$955 saved for retirement. Even among workers with some savings, the median balance is just \$40,000, far below the estimated \$1.5 million that many Americans need for a comfortable retirement.

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



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