

**Congress Extends Government Funding to March;
WIOA Reauthorization Bill Excluded in CR**

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WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

December 23, 2024

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This is the final mailing of 2024, the weekly newsletter will resume on Monday, January 6, 2025. We hope everyone has a happy, safe holiday season!

Washington Update

Continuing Resolution/WIOA Reauthorization

Congress narrowly averted a government shutdown early Saturday morning by passing a slimmed-down continuing resolution (CR), which was then sent to President Biden's desk for his signature. The original 1,547-page bill was condensed to just 118 pages, and the final version notably excluded reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Earlier versions of the CR included various legislative measures, such as the A Stronger Workforce for America Act (ASWA), all of which were ultimately removed to prioritize a more focused approach. The final legislation funds the government at current levels through March 14, 2025, excludes provisions for raising or suspending the debt ceiling sought by President-elect Donald Trump, allocates \$100 billion for disaster aid, and extends programs in the farm bill through September to allow more time for negotiations.

The bipartisan proposal that was released earlier in the week faced sharp criticism from President-elect Donald Trump and Elon Musk, a close Trump ally who is set to lead the

newly created Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). Both argued that the bill contained excessive provisions that should be removed, and that language on the debt ceiling should be added. On Thursday, December 19, House Republicans attempted to pass a GOP-only stopgap measure that included a two-year debt limit suspension, but it failed in a 174-235 vote, with 38 Republican lawmakers joining Democrats in opposition.

With the A Stronger Workforce for American Act legislation removed from the CR, the path forward for WIOA reauthorization remains uncertain, as it is unclear whether the 119th Congress will have enough advocates to prioritize workforce training.

Meanwhile, Senator Bob Casey's (PA) departure from Capitol Hill leaves a void in disabled workers' advocacy, as he fought in his final days to add a provision ending the subminimum wage to the WIOA reauthorization bill, believing that legislation is the best way to eliminate the 14(c) exception in the Fair Labor Standards Act. Casey emphasized the need for a statutory foundation to ensure lasting policy change and also highlighted his collaboration with Senators Maggie Hassan (NH), Tammy Duckworth (IL), Chris Van Hollen (MD), and Cory Booker (NJ) on disability issues. He expressed hope that they will continue this work in the next Congress, including efforts to strengthen the home health care workforce.

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

Department of Labor

President-elect Donald Trump's Department of Labor (DOL) landing team includes key officials from his first term, such as Virginia Secretary of Labor Bryan Slater, former EEOC member Keith Sonderling, and healthcare executive Thomas Beck, along with a former chair of the Federal Labor Relations Authority. Slater served as DOL's assistant secretary for administration and management under Trump, while Sonderling was acting head of the Wage and Hour Division before joining the EEOC. Beck, vice president of labor relations at HCA Healthcare, also chaired the Federal Labor Relations Authority and advised Trump's first-term transition. Additional landing team members are expected soon, with agencies like the EEOC and NLRB forming their own teams. These teams are critical for the transition process, especially before Senate confirmations allow new leadership to officially take over.

Congresswoman Lori Chavez-DeRemer (OR), Trump's pick for Labor Secretary, has started seeking support for her nomination on Capitol Hill, meeting with Senator Markwayne Mullin (R-Okla.), a member of the Senate HELP Committee last week. Chavez-DeRemer will also meet with Republican Senators Josh Hawley (MO), Lisa Murkowski (AK), Ted Budd (NC), Tommy Tuberville (AL), and Marsha Blackburn (TN) this week.

Unions have shown cautious optimism about her nomination, while some businesses are concerned it could signal a shift away from the GOP's pro-employer labor stance. However,

she is seen as one of Trump's least controversial nominees and may gain support from Democrats aiming to preserve aspects of President Biden's labor agenda. Chavez-DeRemer's efforts on the Hill are supported by Molly Conway, a former DOL official from Trump's first administration.

House Education and the Workforce Committee/Senate HELP Committee

On Wednesday, December 18, Congressman Bobby Scott (VA) was re-elected as the lead Democrat on the House Education and the Workforce Committee, marking his sixth term in this role. Scott reaffirmed his commitment to advancing policies that protect workers' rights, expand access to high-quality education, and improve health care for all. He plans to focus on overseeing the incoming administration while opposing Republican efforts to cut education funding and block student loan forgiveness initiatives. Scott will work alongside Congressman Tim Walberg (MI), the newly elected chair, with whom he aims to collaborate on evidence-based policies. Regardless of which political party is in charge, Scott emphasized that his mission remains the same: to build an America where everyone can succeed.

Significant changes are underway in the Senate for the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, as incoming Majority Leader John Thune (SD) has announced several new Republican members joining the committee next term including Senators Tim Scott (SC), Josh Hawley (MO), Jim Banks (IN), Mike Crapo (ID), and Marsha Blackburn (TN). These changes come as the committee prepares to address critical workforce and education issues in the upcoming legislative session.

California Behavioral Health Workforce

On Monday, December 16, the Biden Administration approved nearly \$2 billion in state and federal funds to bolster California's behavioral health workforce. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services authorized \$1.9 billion over five years to "improve quality and behavioral health outcomes" in select counties. Part of the funding will strengthen the workforce at hospitals and clinics serving Medi-Cal beneficiaries, including through scholarships, training, and recruitment programs. Additional funds are designated for children and youth with behavioral health conditions or those at risk of developing them.

The BH-CONNECT program, part of Governor Gavin Newsom's \$15 billion overhaul of the state's behavioral health system, aims to expand services for Medi-Cal beneficiaries. The funding will support transitional housing, inpatient psychiatric care, and community-based mental health initiatives. Starting in July 2025, BH-CONNECT will also expand short-term rental assistance for individuals transitioning from institutional settings or foster care.

This approval comes as states expedite Medicaid initiatives, anticipating potential shifts in federal health care policy under the next administration. Critics caution against the program's waiver of a federal rule that restricts Medicaid funding for large psychiatric

institutions, arguing it could lead to an overemphasis on locked facilities at the expense of less restrictive community care.

Initial Jobless Claims

In the week ending December 14, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims was 220,000, a decrease of 22,000 from the previous week's unrevised level of 242,000. The 4-week moving average was 225,500, an increase of 1,250 from the previous week's unrevised average of 224,250. The advance seasonally adjusted insured unemployment rate was 1.2 percent for the week ending December 7, unchanged from the previous week's unrevised rate.

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

New from DOL/ETA

U.S. Department of Labor Awards \$99.3 Million in Grants to Support Training, Job Services to Prepare Young People to Succeed in High-Demand Careers

On Thursday, December 12, the U.S. Department of Labor announced its award of \$99.3 million in grants to 71 organizations in 31 states to provide training and employment services in its continuing effort to expand access to Registered Apprenticeships, prepare young workers for quality jobs and equip them with industry skills. These YouthBuild Program grants will support pre-apprenticeships to educate and train young people from 16 to 24 and neither enrolled in school or now in the labor market for construction jobs and employment in other high-demand industries. YouthBuild grants will help deliver education and training to enable participants to build or rehabilitate affordable housing in their communities for people in need. The awards follow the department's July 18, 2024, funding availability announcement. The department made proposals that align training with local infrastructure projects funded by the Biden-Harris administration's Investing in America agenda a priority.

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

Department of Labor Welcomes President Biden as Newest Hall of Honor Inductee

On Monday, December 16, Acting Secretary of Labor Julie Su honored President Joe Biden by announcing his induction to the U.S. Department of Labor's Hall of Honor.

During an event establishing former Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins' homestead as a national monument, Acting Secretary Su lauded the nation's leader for his tireless support of U.S. workers and labor unions before bestowing the department's high honor on the President.

In more than 50 years of public service, President Biden has remained devoted to improving the lives of America's workers, retirees and their families by championing pro-union policies that strengthen the middle class and build an economy from the middle out and the bottom up. Under his leadership, more than 16 million jobs have been created in America, threatened pensions have been secured for more than 1.2 million workers and retirees and the number of workers seeking to join a union has doubled.

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

TEGL: Updated National Dislocated Worker Grant Program Guidance and Application Information

On Tuesday, December 17, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA) released the Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) "Updated National Dislocated Worker Grant Program Guidance and Application Information" to inform the state and local workforce development system of the policies and priorities that govern the award and use of National Dislocated Worker Grant (DWG) funds, pursuant to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Title I, Section 170.

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

WDC in the News

Bridging the Gap: Advancing Equity and Access to Quality Jobs Through California's Workforce Development System

New Ways to Work just released a new report, supported by the James Irvine Foundation and conducted by New Ways to Work, a leading non-profit consulting firm specializing in workforce development, aims to address a critical question: What prevents Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) and their partners from focusing on quality jobs within their own organizations and for customers and communities that have been historically underserved or failed by multiple systems, and where can flexible funding help mitigate these barriers?

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

California Unveils Framework for Helping People Without Degrees Get Good Jobs

Last week, California Governor Gavin Newsom unveiled a framework for the state's new Master Plan for Career Education. It includes plans to remove degree requirements for tens of thousands of state jobs, create a "Career Passport" that emphasizes skills over degrees, and expand efforts to translate work experience into college credits.

The full plan, which will be released in early 2025, builds on previous funding efforts for workforce boards, adult schools, and apprenticeships. It aims to increase coordination among different agencies and programs to make it easier for job seekers to find meaningful and well-paid jobs. Newsom announced the creation of the new plan last year, recognizing the need to increase access to well-paid jobs as AI and other emerging technologies transform the employment landscape. In recent decades, Californians with a bachelor's degree have increased their wages, while households with no degree-holder have seen them decline.

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

The Fate of Leading Workforce Development Program in Peril

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the nation's primary workforce development program, was not included in the final version of stopgap legislation to fund the federal government, sparking concern among advocates about the fate of critical training initiatives. "This leaves our nation's public workforce system once again at a crossroads as workforce development boards look ahead to the future," said the National Association of Workforce boards in a statement. WIOA was last updated and authorized in 2014.

An earlier version of the stopgap measure — or continuing resolution — included funding for A Stronger Workforce for America Act (ASWA), which would have reauthorized WIOA through 2030. Ultimately, Congress sent a stripped down version of the bill to President Biden's desk, narrowly averting a government shutdown. The legislation will fund the U.S. government through mid-March 2025. Among the stakeholders who were advocating for WIOA's reauthorization were community colleges, which are critical to the nation's workforce training.

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

Reports & Articles

New from U.S. Department of Transportation

Biden-Harris Administration Invests \$4.2 Million in Education and Job Training Programs to Support the Transportation Workforce

On Thursday, December 19, the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) announced \$4.2 million in grants under the Highway Construction Training Program for 16 programs to recruit, train, and place highway construction jobs. Funded through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Highway Construction Training Program fills critical shortages in highway construction, maintenance, and operations jobs needed to build and maintain the nation's roads and bridges.

The grants fund activities to train and employ nearly 1,100 jobs across the country. These new programs include training for heavy duty equipment operators, scholarships for pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs, and programs to obtain a commercial driver's license. These programs support DOT's priorities to promote jobs for women, veterans and people with disabilities. These programs also include outreach to help hire people who were previously incarcerated, underemployed, or have dropped out of the workforce.

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

Fast Fact

According to recent data, a significant portion of the American workforce plans to work during major holidays, with a survey showing that around 24% of employees intend to work on Christmas Eve, 12% on Christmas Day, and 19% on New Year's Day, indicating a trend of working even during traditional vacation periods like holidays; furthermore, a large majority of American workers (around 68%) admitted to working while on vacation in 2023.



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