

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

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Strengthening Cities Through
Workforce Development



THE U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

March 30, 2026



Appropriations/Budget

On Friday, March 27, Senate Appropriations Chair Susan Collins (ME) announced that Senator Jon Husted (OH) has been appointed to serve on the Committee after Senator Markwayne Mullin (OK) was confirmed as Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Husted will also serve on the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies subcommittee.

Additionally, White House Budget Director Russ Vought plans to testify before Congress on Wednesday, April 15, regarding President Trump's FY27 budget request, which is expected to be released on Friday, April 3.

[Click here](#) to access the full press release on Senator Husted's appointment.

Department of Labor AI

On Tuesday, March 24, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) announced the launch of "Make America AI-Ready," a free artificial intelligence (AI) literacy course designed to provide American workers with foundational AI skills. The seven-day, 10-minutes per day course, which will be delivered via text message, was developed through a public-private partnership with the education technology company Arist and aligns with DOL's AI Literacy Framework released last month.

The program reflects broader Administration efforts to integrate AI education into workforce development and K-12 curricula, aiming to prepare American workers for opportunities in an AI-driven economy.

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

Department of Labor Visas

On Thursday, March 26, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) issued a proposed rule that would raise wage requirements for H-1B, H-1B1, and E-3 visa holders, as well as for permanent labor certification applicants, to better align foreign workers wages with those of similarly employed American workers. The rule would increase prevailing wage levels for all four wage tiers, using updated statistical thresholds from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics Survey.

The intent is to curb abuse of visa programs by reducing incentives for employers to hire lower-paid foreign workers in place of American workers. The proposed rule updates the methodology for determining prevailing wages in both temporary and permanent employment-based visa programs and aims to ensure wage parity between U.S. and foreign workers with similar qualifications. Under the current law, employers must pay at least the prevailing wage or the wage paid to similarly qualified U.S. workers in the area of employment — the new rule would raise the minimum thresholds.

The proposed rule will undergo a 60-day notice and comment period, with additional guidance and technical assistance to be provided on DOL's Office of Foreign Labor Certification website.

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

Senate HELP Committee

On Monday, March 23, Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee Ranking Member Bernie Sanders (VT) sent a letter to Committee Chair Bill Cassidy (LA) urging he hold a public hearing with Amazon founder Jeff Bezos to discuss the potential impact of artificial intelligence (AI) and automation on American workers. The letter referenced reports that Bezos is seeking to raise \$100 billion in order to fund a manufacturing transformation driven by these technologies. Bezos' initiative intends to buy up firms in key industries and use AI to boost productivity, which Sanders fears would put millions of blue-color manufacturing workers' jobs at risk.

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



New from DOL/ETA

Initial Jobless Claims

In the week ending March 21, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims was 210,000, an increase of 5,000 from the previous week's unrevised level of 205,000. The 4-week moving average was 210,500, a decrease of 250 from the previous week's unrevised average of 210,750.

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



How Workforce and Training Organizations are Navigating the Adoption of AI

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI), and especially generative AI, is creating new opportunities and challenges for workforce systems and training organizations. Through listening sessions over the course of 2025, we engaged with nearly 20 representatives of workforce, training, educational, and other community-based organizations that work with lower-income populations to help them prepare for, attain, and advance in employment opportunities.

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

March 2026 Labor Market Update: How Women Have Closed the Other Workforce Gender Gap

For 250 years, simple arithmetic has helped define the U.S. labor market: More jobs are held by men than women. That gap has shaped everything from wage dynamics to sector composition to how employers think about their recruiting pipelines. But that gap is closing, likely faster than most people realize. At this point, it has vanished entirely.

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

The Apprenticeship (R)Evolution

Located near the sprawling Tahoe-Reno Industrial Center, home to Tesla Gigafactory 1, Truckee Meadows Community College trains Tesla employees in advanced manufacturing skills year-round. And while Tesla itself may be polarizing, the growth of the program is undeniable: In 2023, TMCC trained 85 Tesla apprentices; today, completers number 1,000-plus and growing—quickly.

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

One Million Apprentices? The Math Only Works If Women Are Included

President Trump is right to set an ambitious goal of reaching 1M registered apprentices. It's the kind of bold target the country needs to expand opportunity and strengthen the workforce. But setting a goal alone won't get us there, especially when the administration's own policy choices would undermine the effort.

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



New from Brookings

The Past, Present, and Future of the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), signed into law on July 4, 2025, mentions the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program only in passing. Nevertheless, other changes the law makes to the student loan program will have important impacts on PSLF, which forgives remaining student loan balances for borrowers who work full-time for qualifying public service employers.

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

New from New America

The Understated Value of Regional Intermediaries for Workforce and Economic Development

On Tuesday, March 31, from 12:00 - 1:30 pm (EST), New America will hold the virtual event “The Understated Value of Regional Intermediaries for Workforce and Economic Development” that will highlight ongoing research around regional economic and workforce development intermediaries as well as a new partnership between New America and the Association of Community College Trustees to build community college capacity for economic and workforce development – an expansion of New America’s Accelerator for Community Colleges in the Innovation Economy, launched with the U.S. National Science Foundation.

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

Leveraging Intermediaries to Strengthen Workforce and Economic Development Systems

This post is the first in a series for New America’s Future of Work & Innovation Economy initiative about intermediaries—the organizations that sit between employers, educators, workforce and economic developers, government, and students and job seekers. Intermediaries have been part of the American workforce and economic development landscape for decades, and there is broad agreement that their role matters.

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

State Legislatures Weighing in on Workforce Pell

With legislative sessions in full swing, 14 state legislatures have introduced bills that affect Workforce Pell implementation. Workforce Pell represents the largest expansion of the Pell Grant for low-income students in more than 50 years, extending eligibility to very short-term and noncredit programs. But unlike traditional Pell programs, states play a central role in approving these programs before they can access federal funding.

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



Fact of the Week

A Gallup survey found that about 2 in 10 workers ages 18 to 34 think now is a good time to find a job, compared to about 4 in 10 workers ages 65 and older who say the same. The survey reflects what economists call a “low-hire, low-fire” job market: businesses are keeping

most workers on staff, and layoffs remain low. This provides job security for older workers, but slow hiring makes it harder for young workers to break in and secure permanent employment.

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



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