



## **WEEKLY NEWSLETTER**

February 3, 2025

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# Washington Update

## **Appropriations**

Senate Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Susan Collins (ME) remains optimistic that a "top-line" deal on overall funding totals can be reached despite slow progress in negotiations. Collins acknowledged that while there is no agreement yet, the talks are ongoing. However, Senate Appropriations Committee Vice Chair Patty Murray (WA) warned that President Trump's funding freeze could undermine bipartisan efforts to keep the government funded beyond March 14, and expressed concern that future administrations could disregard funding agreements. Meanwhile, nonprofits and public health groups are challenging Trump's freeze on federal aid programs, which could affect more than 400 health programs, transportation projects, and various other initiatives. However, programs such as Pell Grants and direct loans remain unaffected.

## **Department of Labor Secretary Nominee**

Senate Republicans are divided over Lori Chavez- DeRemer's support for the Democrats' pro-union legislation, the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, which aims to strengthen workers' rights to organize and collectively bargain by making significant changes to labor law, including restrictions on right-to-work laws. Senator Rand Paul (KY) criticized Chavez-DeRemer's backing of the PRO Act, arguing it opposes national right-to-work laws and preempts state laws. Paul, a lead author of the right-to-work bill, plans to vote against her confirmation and suggested she could lose over a dozen GOP votes, requiring her to rely on Democrats for confirmation. However, Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Chair Bill Cassidy (LA) said he found his conversation with Chavez-DeRemer reassuring despite his colleagues' concerns.

## **Department of Labor Return to Work**

On Wednesday, January 29, House Education and Workforce Committee Chairman Tim Walberg (MI) sent a letter to Department of Labor (DOL) Acting Secretary Vince Micone urging DOL to return to in-person work, following President Trump's January 20 memorandum requiring federal employees to end remote work. Walberg commended the memo and called for immediate implementation, highlighting the slow return to normal operations since DOL ceased regular work due to COVID-19.

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

## **Child Care Workforce and Facilities Act**

On Monday, January 27, Senators Amy Klobuchar (MN) and Dan Sullivan (AK) reintroduced the Child Care Workforce and Facilities Act to combat the nationwide shortage of affordable child care. The bipartisan legislation aims to provide competitive grants to states to train child care workers and build or renovate child care facilities, particularly in rural areas. It addresses the rising cost of child care, which is becoming a barrier to children's development and parents' ability to enter the workforce. The bill would offer grants to improve workforce development, expand facilities, and increase the availability and affordability of quality child care. It aims to enhance retention and compensation for child care professionals and address shortages, especially in rural communities and child care deserts. Companion legislation is also being led in the House by Congressmen Josh Harder (CA) and Brian Fitzpatrick (PA).

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

## **Head Start**

On Thursday, January 30, Representatives John Garamendi (CA), Don Beyer (VA),

Suzanne Bonamici (OR), and 30 other House Democrats sent a letter highlighting payment delays faced by Head Start providers. Despite a White House budget office memo that initially froze federal financial assistance, which was later clarified not to affect Head Start grants and rescinded after a federal judge's ruling, program directors remain uncertain. The letter noted that providers who submitted funding requests between January 23 and January 27 have not received payments, which are typically approved within 24 hours. Additionally, providers with February 1 grant renewals have not received notices. Lawmakers warned that without timely payments, programs may be forced to rely on external funding or credit lines to cover essential expenses.

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

## **Initial Jobless Rate**

In the week ending January 25, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims was 207,000, a decrease of 16,000 from the previous week's unrevised level of 223,000. The 4-week moving average was 212,500, a decrease of 1,000 from the previous week's unrevised average of 213,500. The advance seasonally adjusted insured unemployment rate was 1.2 percent for the week ending January 18, unchanged from the previous week's unrevised rate.

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

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# **New from DOL/ETA**

## **State Employment and Unemployment Report**

On Tuesday, January 28, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) released the State Employment and Unemployment monthly report which indicated that in December 2024, unemployment rates were higher in 6 states, lower in 2 states, and stable in 42 states and the District of Columbia. Nonfarm payroll employment increased in 2 states and was essentially unchanged in 48 states and the District.

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

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# **WDC in the News**

## **Mayor Woodards Secures Grant for Workforce Development and Childcare Hub on Tacoma's East Side**

The project, led by the Pierce County Labor Community Services Agency in partnership with the Mayor's Office, focuses on addressing two critical community needs: affordable

and accessible childcare for working families and expanded access to workforce training for skilled trades. The initiative proposes converting the former Willard Elementary School into a dual-purpose center offering 24-hour childcare services alongside registered apprenticeship training programs. “This project is a game-changer for Tacoma and Pierce County,” said Woodards. “By investing in our community and providing critical resources like childcare and training, we are creating opportunities for everyone to thrive. This funding will help us meet our commitment to workforce development and equitable access to resources.”

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

## **How Workforce Development Boosts Career and Economic Growth**

This week American businesses were scrambling to reassess their workforce development strategies as the current administration proposed halting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) grants. The shift comes as 46% of workers believe they have adequate opportunities to learn new skills, according to a 2024 PricewaterhouseCoopers survey. This highlights a gap between workforce needs and current development initiatives. Workforce development stands out as a key benefit, often provided by DEI, HR and philanthropic departments, that have economic impacts in society and within businesses.

Workforce development programs range from training, certifications, job search and advancement support, mentoring, coaching, and overall career development. This type of support is not limited to diverse communities, yet underrepresented communities often are the communities that lack the resources, skills, and access to career advancement. This skills gap is particularly evident in sectors like technology, where demographic disparities persist. For instance, as noted by the Hispanic Federation, Latinos make up one-fifth of the U.S. workforce, they represent only 8% of STEM workers.

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

## **How Emerging Technologies are Transforming the Job Market and Workforce Development**

Technology is transforming the job market at an unprecedented pace. As tech titans, AI, automation, and blockchain rewrite the rulebook, fresh occupations arise, and traditional ones get left in the dust. It's not just the economy that's going digital – our approach to workforce development is too, with new strategies emerging to equip workers with the skills they need to succeed. As the job market undergoes a profound shift, a fresh set of skills is emerging. This article sifts through the noise to uncover the most in-demand abilities and examines how forward-thinking workforce development programs are helping bridge the skills gap.

Emerging technologies are poised to bend traditional employment as we know it. As new technologies take hold, they're not just streamlining processes – they're reconfiguring the very DNA of organizations and the skills they demand from their people.

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

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## Reports & Articles

### **New from Brookings**

#### **Apprenticeships Can Supercharge Career Opportunities for Youth**

At a recent Brookings event on youth apprenticeships, 20-year-old former apprentice Frankie Mansaray interviewed Sen. John Hickenlooper (D-Colo.) in a fireside chat. Mansaray (who also co-authored this piece) pointed out that youth apprenticeships represent a rare opportunity for bipartisan cooperation, and asked the senator what it is about youth apprenticeships that gets support from both political parties.

“Apprenticeships are really just a larger reflection of our kids, which is a larger reflection of our future,” Sen. Hickenlooper noted. “It’s not Republican or Democrat, how we make sure we have more opportunities for more of our kids. It’s not Republican or Democrat, how we make sure that we have a workforce to continue to lead the world in innovation and new ideas. This is something that Republicans, Democrats alike can support.”

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

#### **Trump’s Dramatic Plan to Cut the Federal Workforce**

In his second week in office, President Trump offered federal workers a deal: Resign by Feb. 6 and receive full pay and benefits through Sept. 30 while on administrative leave. The move, aimed at sharply reducing the workforce, poses challenges for employees, the government, and Trump’s own presidency. Here’s why.

First, the workers. There is no guarantee that this offer is legal. The federal government was first granted buyout authority during the Bush administration as part of the so-called “Cold War dividend.” When the Clinton administration came in, they had big plans to reinvent government. Getting buyout authority for the domestic side of the government was a high priority for them, and in March 1994, Congress passed, and Clinton signed, a bill permitting buyouts of up to \$25,000.

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

## **New from Aspen Institute**

### **Webinar: Re-Entry and Good Jobs: Building the Second Chances We All Believe In**

On Wednesday, February 26, the Aspen Institute will host the webinar “Re-Entry and Good Jobs: Building the Second Chances We All Believe In.” In this part two of our series “Work Behind and Beyond Bars: Improving Job Quality During and After Incarceration,” the Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program will explore the opportunities and challenges accessing good jobs for people after incarceration.

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

## **New from Center for American Progress**

### **Early Childhood Education: Setting a Foundation for All Children to Thrive**

Children are born ready to learn. The first five years of life are a critical period in which the brain develops more rapidly than at any other stage, providing the building blocks for learning, health, and behavior. Early learning happens in any setting where young children are, whether at home or in a variety of child care settings with a trusted and qualified early childhood professional. Yet, the United States does not provide the resources needed to support this period of rapid brain development through an accessible, publicly funded early childhood education (ECE) system. Waiting to begin access to free and public education until kindergarten goes against what is known about brain development, how children learn, and the economic realities of young families.

Early childhood education is a public good and should be funded as such. Achieving a system that works better for young children, their families, and early educators will require robust public investment, system reform, and inclusion of early childhood education in policy discussions about creating a comprehensive continuum of high-quality public education for all Americans. This chapter of the Center for American Progress report “A Progressive Vision for Education in the 21st Century” examines how policymakers can do so.

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

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# **Fast Fact**

***According to Lightcast, one-third of the skills required for U.S. jobs have changed in the last three years, driven by demand for skills in generative AI, green technology, and cybersecurity. STEM roles are leading the shift, which is compounded by an upcoming labor shortage.***



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