



National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity

NAPE PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE—MARCH 2014

NAPE News

Public Policy Day during the [NAPE 2014 Professional Development Institute](#) is shaping up to be the best ever! We are excited that Congressman Bobby Scott has accepted our invitation to be the keynote speaker. We will also hear from key administrators and legislators: Brenda Dann-Messier, Assistant Secretary, U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE); Latifa Lyles, Acting Director, Women's Bureau, U.S. Dept. of Labor; and Congressmen James R. Langevin (D-RI) and Glenn Thompson (R-PA), both of whom serve as House CTE Caucus Co-Chairs. Following this half day of briefings, participants are encouraged to visit their respective congressional offices. NAPE Public Policy Director, Lisa Ransom, has prepared a brief webinar on best practices when making these visits which is posted here: <http://youtu.be/Vk3kJEcZ6gg>.

Ask Your Representative to Sign House Perkins Funding Letter

NAPE is forwarding this message on behalf of ACTE. Beginning this week, lawmakers who support CTE will have the opportunity to sign on to a letter to the House Appropriations Committees urging a strong federal investment in Perkins for Fiscal Year (FY) 2015. This effort is being led by Reps. Glenn Thompson (R-PA) and Jim Langevin (D-RI), the co-chairs of the bipartisan Congressional CTE Caucus, who are asking their House colleagues to join them in supporting federal funding for CTE in the FY 2015 appropriations bill.

Perkins is the principal source of federal funding for CTE and is working to build the capacity of secondary and postsecondary institutions to offer CTE programs that are academically rigorous and aligned to the needs of business and industry. However, funding has not kept pace with growing demand.

We need as many members of the House as possible to sign this letter to ensure that the appropriations committee recognizes the importance of funding CTE. Please take a few minutes to help us in this effort. The deadline for your Member of Congress to sign on is March 31. Contact your representative and urge them to sign today! [Learn how at the ACTE website.](#)

Administration

Many U.S. Adults Hold Educational Credentials That Are Valuable Alternatives to Degrees

The U.S. Census Bureau recently released [Measuring Alternative Educational Credentials: 2012](#), which reports that, as of fall 2012, more than 50 million U.S. adults (about 25 percent of the adult population) had received a professional certification, license, or educational certificate that was not a degree awarded by a college or university. Of the awardees, almost 34 million had a professional certification or license, 7 million had an educational certificate, and 12 million had received both a professional certification or license and an educational certificate.

These alternative credentials covered a wide variety of content areas, including business, cosmetology, culinary arts, education, finance, management, and nursing. According to this first Census Bureau report ever about alternative educational credentials, they generally led to higher median monthly earnings for people with less than a bachelor's degree, ranging from \$4,167 for those with only a professional certification or license to \$3,433 for those with only an educational certificate, and \$3,920 for those with both types of credentials. People without an alternative credential earned only \$3,110, by comparison. There was little difference reported for people who had earned at least a bachelor's degree, whether they added an alternative certificate or not.

The Bureau also reported that professional certifications and licenses were more common at the level of an associate's degree or higher, and especially so for people with master's and professional degrees.

The study found 11.2 million adults who had at most a high school diploma and also held a professional certification or license. If such an alternative credential were the hallmark of a revised measure of educational levels, then almost 5 percent of the adult population would move into a higher (i.e., more than high school) education category.

The study also determined that almost three-quarters of recent or current jobs required professional certifications and licenses. Further, some 30 percent of adults who worked during the previous 4 months held an alternative credential, compared to 16 percent of unemployed adults and 13 percent of adults not in the labor force. The data included in the report were collected between September and December 2012 using the [Survey of Income and Program Participation](#). (From [CTE Technical Assistance Center of New York](#), February 25, 2014)

TANF in the President's Budget

The Budget continues existing funding for the TANF program. It also encourages Congressional reauthorization efforts to improve program effectiveness, including using performance indicators to drive program improvement and ensure that states have flexibility to engage recipients in the most effective activities to promote success in the workforce, including families with serious barriers to employment. In addition, the President's proposal includes several changes:

- (1) It redirects \$10 million from the Contingency Fund for program improvements including technical assistance for state programs, research, and evaluation.
- (2) It repurposes the remaining \$602 Contingency Fund for subsidized employment for low-income parents and guardians, and youth.
- (3) It proposes prohibiting the use of nongovernmental third party expenditures to meet state MOE requirements and a provision to ensure that states use TANF funds for benefits and services for needy families.

President Obama's 2015 budget seeks to strengthen the economic recovery in the near term; reduce deficits and debt as a share of the economy over the medium and long term through higher revenues, program cuts, and comprehensive immigration reform; help low-wage workers

by strengthening the Earned Income Tax Credit; and increase investment in such key areas as research and early childhood education.

The budget would strengthen the EITC for low-income childless workers. In addition, the budget provides significant new resources for high-quality early education and re-proposes a \$75 billion initiative from last year's budget to make pre-K available to all low- and moderate-income children.

The budget also proposes an added \$56 billion in fiscal year 2015 funding for an “Opportunity, Growth, and Security Initiative,” evenly split between defense and nondefense discretionary programs. Favored non-defense areas under this initiative include infrastructure, health and science research, and education and training. (From the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, March 7, 2014)

U.S. Department of Labor Announces “Ready to Work Partnership” SGA

The U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) released the [Solicitation for Grant Applications](#) (SGA) for “Ready to Work Partnership” grants for sector partnerships to prepare and place the long-term unemployed into good-paying jobs. President Obama announced the \$150 million grant program last month at a [White House event](#) that brought together national corporations, small- and medium-sized employers, training providers, and workforce boards—including employers from Business Leaders United for Workforce Partnerships (BLU) and members of National Skills Coalition's (NSC) Leadership Council—to discuss strategies to help the long-term unemployed back to work.

The grants are designed to support and scale partnerships between multiple employers within an industry, workforce boards, community colleges, and community-based organizations that provide integrated training and rapid reemployment services that include paid work experience (i.e., on-the-job-training, apprenticeships, or paid internships) designed to help the long-term unemployed reenter the labor market. Training must target in-demand middle- and high-skill industries and occupations where employers currently use foreign workers on H-1B visas.

USDOL expects to award 20 to 30 grants ranging from \$3 million to \$10 million to programs that focus on employer engagement, individualized counseling, job placement assistance, and work-based training that facilitates hiring for jobs.

In order for programs to qualify, they must involve at least three employers or a regional industry association consisting of at least three employers who are actively engaged in the program. Applications will be received through June 19, 2014. For more information about the “Ready to Work Partnership” grants, visit <http://www.doleta.gov/readytowork>. (From J. Spaulding, [National Skills Coalition](#), February 20, 2014)

President Obama to Order Expansion of Overtime Pay

President Obama plans to order new overtime protections for “millions of workers,” using his executive authority to revise regulations covering who should be paid extra for working more than 40 hours a week.

On March 12, 2014, a White House official said that the President would direct [Labor Secretary Thomas Perez](#) “to begin the process of strengthening overtime pay protections for millions of workers to help make sure they are paid a fair wage for a hard day’s work while simplifying the rules for employers and workers alike.” The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the move reflects the fact that current [Labor Department](#) regulations establishing a 40-hour workweek have grown outdated. According to the White House, millions of salaried workers have had to work 50 or 60 hours a week without being paid overtime — and, in some cases, “making barely enough to keep a family out of poverty.”

The White House did not say how administration officials plan to overhaul regulations to ensure that workers are better compensated. But administration officials cited their authority to regulate overtime under the [1938 Fair Labor Standards Act](#). That act requires most workers to be paid overtime but permits exemptions at the discretion of the Labor Department. One prominent exemption permits employers to deny overtime pay to “executive, administrative and professional” workers.

Companies have broad leeway to classify workers as being in this category, even if their job duties are far from what is generally considered white-collar work. Today, most workers who make more than \$455 per week are eligible to be classified as “executive, administrative and professional.” Workers earning less than that must be paid overtime.

The [George W. Bush administration](#) set the \$455 level in 2004, and it has not been adjusted to account for inflation. If inflation were taken into account, the threshold would be \$553 per week. The White House official noted that the Labor Department first set the salary threshold in 1975 at \$250 per week, which would be \$970 in today’s dollars.

One option for the administration would be to hike the federal threshold to somewhere between \$550 and \$1,000 per week, and perhaps set it to rise automatically with inflation. California and New York already have set state thresholds of \$640 per week and \$600 per week, respectively, with the caps set to rise to \$800 per week and \$675 per week in 2016.

The White House official said the action, which was first reported by *The New York Times*, is part of the administration’s campaign to make progress on important priorities despite political gridlock in Congress. (From Z.A. Goldfarb and J. Hicks, [Obama’s Expected Change to Overtime Rules Would Make More Eligible for Extra Pay](#), *Washington Post*, March 12, 2014)

The President’s 2015 Budget: Thoughtful Responses to Poverty

[The President Obama’s 2015 budget](#) reflects exactly that type of multi-faceted investment strategy. The proposal has two parts. First is a base budget, which includes his priorities for discretionary spending within limits included in the Congressional budget agreement from last December. The base budget also includes other “mandatory” spending and tax proposals not covered by those limits, but that would, in net, bring down the deficit. In addition, he has offered an Opportunity, Growth and Security Initiative budget, which would fund additional priorities by closing tax loopholes and making other reforms. These dual proposals outline clear priorities for investments in workforce development, education and training, early childhood and family support programs, youth programs, and employment generation. The two-part budget package

offers both reasonable investments under current budget constraints and a road map to the necessary steps to fundamentally and positively impact the lives of low-income Americans.

The base budget sets out the President's priorities within the constraints of the spending caps under the Budget Control Act of 2011, as modified by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013. The total discretionary spending level in this budget is \$1.014 trillion, \$19 billion below the actual spending approved by Congress for FY 2014. It includes targeted expansions of funding in some critical areas, such as early childhood education, youth programs, and enforcement of labor standards, paid for by cuts in other program. This base budget also specifies mandatory spending and tax improvements for low-income families, including an expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit to single adults (encompassing youth and noncustodial parents, among others).

Supporting low-income Americans is not a single-issue policy agenda. Taken together, this budget offers an urgently needed roadmap for investment in key programs, along with a long-term agenda for implementation. Many of its ideas do double duty as immediate budget proposals and as a guide for federal and state lawmakers over the coming months and years as they consider policy changes to diminish inequality and improve the lives of working Americans. (From CLASP, e-newsletter, March 2014)

President's Budget Proposal Would Eliminate the Only Workforce Program Dedicated to Expanding Women's Access to High-Wage Jobs

The Obama Administration's proposed 2015 budget proposes eliminating the ONLY workforce program that is dedicated to providing opportunities for women to prepare for and enter high-wage, nontraditional jobs. Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations, or WANTO, supports community-based organizations that provide training to women in pre-apprenticeship programs and technical assistance to employers and labor unions.

WANTO is a critical federal workforce program because it addresses one of the principal sources of women's economic insecurity: occupational segregation. The majority of U.S. women do not work in jobs where they have an opportunity to get by, let alone get ahead. Today, 50 percent of women are concentrated in just 26 occupational categories, or only 5 percent of the 504 occupations tracked by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and more than two-thirds of women are concentrated in just 51 occupations.

Despite its modest funding level, WANTO has consistently produced outsized impact. In a recent grant year, trainees enjoyed a job placement rate after their WANTO participation of nearly 90 percent. An [independent study](#) has shown that when programs funded by one of the two federal grant initiatives that supported nontraditional training for women (the Nontraditional Employment for Women Act and WANTO) were implemented in an area, local women were 25 percent more likely to hold a nontraditional job, and that even in years after the policy intervention, women were still more likely to hold nontraditional jobs. Addressing the challenges that women face in today's labor market is a key strategy for restoring security and opportunity to America's families and workers. NAPE should strongly encourage President Obama to reconsider his proposed elimination of WANTO. This lone and effective program dedicated to promoting opportunities for women in nontraditional jobs is a critical strategy for building

women's economic security, promoting diversity in our future workforce, and ensuring America's success. (From Wider Opportunities for Women, [Economic Security Blog](#), March 5, 2014)

White House Announces First Maker Faire

The Obama administration is trying to promote a generation of students who are “makers of things, not just consumers of things.” To encourage this, the White House has [announced](#) plans to hold its first annual Maker Faire later this year (exact date to be determined).

According to the White House, “[b]y democratizing the tools and skills necessary to design and make just about anything,” events such as the Maker Faire can inspire invention and entrepreneurial activities in more people who may then pursue careers related to science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics (STEAM). The administration plans to launch a comprehensive effort to enable students and entrepreneurs to access the tools, facilities, and expertise that can assist them to be inventive and productive. This effort will feature a variety of opportunities for individual Makers and for institutions from the corporate and public sectors, academia, and philanthropic organizations to get involved.

The Maker Faire builds on ongoing initiatives, such as that of the Defense Advanced Projects Agency, which works with the Veteran's Administration to help establish TechShop Pittsburgh. This is a 21st-century apprenticeship program in manufacturing, working with and through startups that provides access to cutting-edge tools for veterans. It is funded by the Department of Labor, the AFL-CIO, and Carnegie Mellon University. (From U.S. Department of Education, OCTAE Connection Issue 187, March 13, 2014)

OFCCP Posts New Information and Resources for Federal Contractors on Section 503 and VEVRAA

OFCCP, on February 21, 2014, posted new information and resources on its website to assist federal contractors with outreach and recruitment targeting individuals with disabilities, employing and retaining individuals with disabilities, promoting self-disclosure as a person with a disability, assistive technologies that help change corporate culture, and reasonable accommodation. Several of the new items are listed below.

Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) resources and information on student internships, mentoring programs, workforce recruitment programs for college students with disabilities, and strategies for increasing employment opportunities within the small business community for individuals with disabilities are [available](#).

Congress

Bipartisan Unemployment Extension Deal Reached

Five Senate Democrats and five Republicans unveiled a deal on extending expired unemployment insurance benefits for 5 months, which should be enough to overcome a GOP filibuster and move the package out of the Senate later this month.

The proposal is paid for using a combination of offsets that includes extending “pension smoothing” provisions from the 2012 highway bill and extending customs user fees through 2024, according to a release.

The bill also includes an additional offset allowing single-employer pension plans to prepay their flat rate premiums to the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation.

The group led by Jack Reed (D-RI) and Dean Heller (R-NV) also includes Republicans Susan Collins (ME), Rob Portman (OH), Lisa Murkowski (AK), and Mark S. Kirk (IL). [Portman and Kirk had voted to filibuster an unemployment extension in February, with Democrats coming up one vote short.](#)

The other Democrats involved are Jeff Merkley (OR), Cory Booker (NJ), Sherrod Brown (OH), and Richard J. Durbin (IL). The plan will allow retroactive payments going back to December 28, when Congress allowed emergency unemployment benefits to expire. In addition, it will prohibit people making more than \$1 million from obtaining benefits, among other provisions.

[Reid had earlier expressed optimism for an unemployment deal](#) and hoped the Senate would be able to pass it once they return. (From H. Sanchez, [Roll Call](#), March 13, 2014)

Women of Congress Promote STEM Education, Careers

The [women of Congress are working to empower young women to see themselves in STEM](#) careers. The congresswomen joined leaders from businesses, nonprofits, and global corporations for a luncheon Wednesday hosted by the nonpartisan Million Women Mentors (MWM). The almost 150 people in attendance dined together to celebrate MWM’s efforts to promote mentoring young women in STEM fields.

STEM careers are the fastest-growing jobs in the United States, yet women make up only a quarter of STEM workers.

To bridge the gender gap and bolster the U.S. labor force, female leaders say young girls need to see STEM careers as an option through mentorships and exciting hands-on education. “When you give a girl a chance to build a robot when she’s 5 or build a rocket when she’s 10, she will have the inspiration and the know-how to become interested in those fields and see her future in those fields,” said Senator [Kirsten Gillibrand](#) (D-NY). Representatives [Debbie Wasserman Schultz](#) (D-FL) and [Kay Granger](#) (R-TX) are trying to do just that. The day after the luncheon, the lawmakers introduced [HR 4161](#), the 21st Century STEM for Underrepresented Students Act.

The legislation would use grants from the National Science Foundation to fund research on STEM programs that work to engage elementary- and middle-school students who are typically underrepresented in STEM fields. “High school and college are often too late to expose students to STEM. That effort must start earlier, and target underrepresented students such as girls, people of color, and those who have historically faced economic or other barriers to STEM achievement,” Wasserman Schultz said in a statement to CQ Roll Call. (From B. Bowman, [Roll Call](#), March 7, 2014)