



Minnesota Workforce Council Association 2009 Federal Legislative Platform

It is the mission of the Minnesota Workforce Council Association to provide Minnesota with a skilled and competitive workforce through engaged and proactive local elected officials, workforce investment boards, and staff.

Emergency Jobs / Stimulus Legislation

MWCA believes any job stimulus plan should: take effect quickly; target unemployed workers; anticipate and address future workforce needs; promote regional competitiveness; and be fiscally responsible. Many unemployed workers would benefit from increased access to short-term opportunities allowing them to utilize or improve their current skills while searching for a permanent job.

- MWCA supports the implementation of an Emergency Jobs program, providing a wage subsidy to employers who provide opportunities to unemployed workers by creating a new job which pays a competitive wage and incorporates a plan to upgrade the worker's current skills.

Workforce Investment Act Reauthorization

The Workforce Investment Act, originally enacted in 1998, continues to await reauthorization. Federal workforce development legislation should be a bi-partisan effort, as the economic competitiveness of our nation's workforce is in the best interests of both parties as well as the American people. MWCA urges reauthorization of WIA early in the 110th Congress to ensure that Congressional intent of the law is maintained; in the absence of a new Act, the Department of Labor has the ability to make, and continues to propose Administrative changes that can be detrimental to the Workforce System.

- MWCA supports maintaining the integrity of the local workforce development system and the private sector-led Workforce Investment Boards, which include local elected officials and other business and community leaders.
- MWCA supports current language that allows flexibility in providing service to both in-school and out-of-school youth. Minnesota believes our current programs for in-school youth keep those students from becoming more troubled out-of-school youth in the future; out-of-school programs support youth in garnering employment, going back to school, obtaining a GED, or other opportunities to take a more positive path.
- MWCA encourages Congress to increase allocations for universal services to all customers who may not fit in a specific program.
- MWCA opposes full consolidation of funding streams; we support transferability between the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, which allows for local flexibility in funding decisions to address the needs of workers in the community.
- MWCA supports maintaining language in regard to the grandfathering-in of membership requirements for local boards that were in existence prior to WIA, and supports eliminating requirements for representation of mandatory partners on the local WIB. Establishing management committees that include the mandatory partners, as most Minnesota WIBs do, should be sufficient.
- MWCA supports integrating programs into WIA which address special populations who wish to remain a part of or re-enter the workforce (such as seniors, veterans, those with limited English and ex-prisoners) allowing increased alignment and flexibility in serving these clients.

Financial Stability for Services

Federal funding for workforce education and training programs has generally been declining over the past two decades, despite the growth in the US workforce and the continued rise in demand for skilled labor. Beyond providing traditional employment and training services, Minnesota has taken a leadership role in strengthening the links between workforce development and employer needs.

- MWCA seeks to at least recover, or ideally to increase, federal funding for local Workforce Service Areas in order to ensure staff and infrastructure resources to provide universal services to customers.
- MWCA encourages Congress to examine the Department of Labor's excessive use of discretionary and unsolicited grants, diverting funds which could instead be invested in the existing Workforce system to enhance services to job seekers and employers. Additionally, by distributing funding through specific grant initiatives, DOL is circumventing the ability of local WIBs to set priorities for their own communities

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Minnesota is a national leader in our approach to integrating TANF employment services and the WIA programs at our One-Stop Career Centers (Minnesota Workforce Centers). In February of 2006, the President signed budget legislation that extends TANF through 2010 and requires most states to substantially increase the number of parents who have jobs or are in training and also increases reporting requirements.

- MWCA supports granting full participation credit for those with disabilities who comply with their employment plan.
- MWCA encourages Congress to review the reporting requirements outlined in the Deficit Reduction Act, which place significantly increased burdens on local providers.
- MWCA supports broadening the definition of activities that count as work, including:
 - 12 weeks for job search;
 - Training, up to one year, including ESL, Adult Education, and Vocational Education programs;
 - Applications for SSI which are waiting for an initial determination or an appeal decision; and
 - Treatment for documented medical or mental health issues.

Trade Adjustment Assistance

The Trade Adjustment Assistance program is the nation's primary venue to provide income support, job training, and other benefits to manufacturing workers who lose their jobs as a result of international trade. TAA services in Minnesota are provided through the statewide network of workforce centers.

- MWCA encourages Congress to integrate Trade Adjustment Assistance with Workforce Investment Act Programs and to ensure that resources are flexible to enough address needs at the local level as determined by local Workforce Investment Boards.

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