



201~~32~~ Federal Legislative Platform

Minnesota Workforce Council Association

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.

Investment in a Competitive Workforce

Federal formula funding for workforce education and training programs has generally been declining over the past two decades, at a time when job openings require skilled labor. Minnesota has taken a leadership role in strengthening the links between workforce development and employers and has implemented innovative solutions to address the needs of local communities.

- MWCA advocates for the establishment of a dedicated federal funding stream, provided to local Workforce Service Areas, to support the staff and infrastructure necessary to provide universal services to customers.
- MWCA encourages Congress to examine the Department of Labor (DOL)'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. Funds should be provided directly to Local Workforce Boards to ensure integration in local programs and priorities.

Workforce Investment Act Reauthorization

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA), originally enacted in 1998, continues to await reauthorization.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 as soon as possible to ensure that Congressional intent of the law is maintained.

- MWCA supports strong leadership roles for local elected officials and business-led local Workforce Investment Boards as a core element of WIA.
- MWCA strongly supports the authority of Local Elected Officials to determine their workforce service areas. If more stringent parameters are included in new legislation, currently existing areas, regardless of size, should be "grandfathered-in" if they have a history of being both fiscally responsible and meeting performance standards.
- MWCA encourages Congress to ensure strong universal services to all job seekers, and streamline specialized services to disadvantaged adults and youth.
- MWCA supports the authorization of a summer employment program for disadvantaged youth.
- MWCA urges Congress to create anti-recessionary training and job creation services for periods of high unemployment.
- MWCA encourages Congress to streamline and simplify the administration of National Emergency Grants.
- MWCA advocates for skill-building opportunities for incumbent workers to prevent/divert dislocation and increase retention.

Job Creation Programs

MWCA believes any additional job creation initiatives 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 additional funding for Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs.
- MWCA supports investments in the implementation of an Emergency Jobs program, like internships and on the job training initiatives, which provide a wage subsidies 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.

- MWCA encourages Congress to allow the use of Unemployment Insurance to support wage subsidy programs.

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Financial Stability for Services

Federal formula funding for workforce education and training programs has generally been declining over the past two decades, at a time when job openings require 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.

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Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

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~~ required most states to substantially increase the number of parents who have jobs or are in training and also increase ~~ds~~ reporting requirements.

- MWCA encourages Congress to review the reporting requirements outlined in the Deficit Reduction Act, which place significantly increased burdens on local providers.
- MWCA encourages Congress to work with states to create meaningful performance measures.
- MWCA supports granting full participation credit for those with disabilities who comply with their employment plan.
- MWCA supports broadening the definition of core activities ~~that count as work, including:~~ to include more realistic job search and training activities.
 - ~~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 enough to address needs at the local level as determined by local Workforce Investment Boards.
- MWCA recommends that funding for special initiatives be distributed to Workforce Investment Boards so integration occurs, utilizing existing partnerships with a history of collaboration.

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