

EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

Strengthening America's Middle Class

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Chairman Hinojosa Statement At Hearing On “Workforce Investment Act: Recommendations to Improve the Effectiveness of Job Training”

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. Rubén Hinojosa (D-TX), chairman of the House Subcommittee On Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness, for a subcommittee hearing on “Workforce Investment Act: Recommendations to Improve the Effectiveness of Job Training”*

Good afternoon and welcome to the first Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Competitiveness hearing on the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act.

The programs authorized under the Workforce Investment Act provide the key supports to economic self-sufficiency for many in our communities. They fund job training, adult education and family literacy services, and vocational and rehabilitative services. Given that we know that nearly two-thirds of the workers who will make up workforce of 2020 are already in jobs today, our future competitiveness, productivity, and prosperity largely rest on fully developing the skills of today’s workers and creating opportunities for their career development and advancement.

It is my hope that we can work in a bipartisan manner to renew the Workforce Investment Act, avoiding the divisive issues of the past, and putting America’s workers in a position to lead the way in a global marketplace.

In 1998, with the Workforce Investment Act, we took a bold step forward in trying to unify a collection of discreet workforce development programs into a coherent system that would serve workers and employers alike. WIA envisioned one-stop services for locally development solutions to workforce development needs. We have come a long way since 1998 but we can do more.

First, we need to reaffirm our commitment to funding these programs. I am pleased that one of the first things we did when the Democrats assumed the majority was to reverse the trend in funding cuts for the program by adding more than \$184 million for fiscal year 2007.

As we hear from today’s distinguished panel of witnesses, it is my hope that we can focus on how to improve the system created by the Workforce Investment Act so that we can spark innovation and strong partnerships at the state and local levels without losing sight of our obligation to ensure that our programs reach those with the greatest needs. We need to make sure that our program structures and performance measures do not provide disincentives to reaching English language learners, adults with disabilities, migrant and seasonal farm workers, adults with low levels of education and low levels of literacy or others who may need multiple supports to achieve their full potential in the workplace.

Yesterday, the Education and Labor Committee approved the Green Jobs Act of 2007, which would create a new program in our workforce investment system focused on federal renewable energy and energy efficiency initiatives. This is one example of how we can use the Workforce investment system to meet the demand for a skilled workforce while addressing a challenge of national and global importance – energy independence.

As we move forward with the reauthorization process, I hope that we can identify other creative ways to harness the power of today's workforce to address national needs now and in the future. I am also interested in exploring how we can ensure that we have the data evaluation measures in place to identify best practices and emerging areas for workforce development while ensuring that the programs are making a difference in the communities with the greatest needs.

I would like to thank the witnesses for joining us today. I am looking forward to your testimony and recommendations.

I would now like to yield to the Ranking Member, Mr. Ric Keller of Florida for his opening statement.

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