

Budzinski Helps Pass Bipartisan Updates to Federal Workforce Development Programs

by Office of U.S. Representative Nikki Budzinski
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WASHINGTON, D.C. — This week, Congresswoman Nikki Budzinski (IL-13) helped to pass bipartisan reforms to the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA)* that will help promote economic security and grow the middle class. The *Stronger Workforce for America Act* includes measures Budzinski pushed for to improve assistance to workers facing layoffs.

“When workers at Akorn Pharmaceuticals and U.S. Steel were laid off without fair notice, the Department of Labor’s rapid response efforts were a critical lifeline,” said Congresswoman Budzinski. “We have to ensure that these workforce development resources are always at the ready to support working people impacted by layoffs and business closures. That’s why I was proud to help pass bipartisan legislation to improve our response capabilities and enhance upskilling programs to minimize the disruption families face with a job loss.”

Budzinski successfully advocated to broaden the definition of "rapid response activities" to include business engagement, layoff aversion strategies and other activities designed to prevent or minimize the duration of unemployment, such as connecting employers to short-term compensation or other programs designed to prevent layoffs.

Budzinski also supported efforts in the bill to repurpose existing funding that the Department of Labor receives from immigration visa fees to use for competitive grants to support a new formula grant program to states. The new grant would be used to support training activities for eligible dislocated workers.

In full, the *Stronger Workforce for America Act* strengthens the relationship between employers and the workforce system, and puts more Americans on the pathway to successful careers by:

- Upskilling American workers.
- Dedicating 50 percent of the adult and dislocated worker funding toward upskilling workers through “individual training accounts” (ITAs) and on-the-job learning while redirecting an existing funding stream toward ITAs for displaced workers.
- Prioritizing employer-led initiatives that equip workers with the skill sets to fill jobs in critical industries and help the currently employed workforce upskill to avoid displacement and advance their careers.

Delivering greater efficiency and accountability to WIOA programs.

- Streamlining the “eligible training provider list” to focus on outcomes and ensure eligible programs are aligned with the skill and hiring demands of employers.
- Strengthening and fully implements the performance accountability system in the law to hold states and local workforce boards accountable for achieving positive labor market outcomes for program participants.

Strengthening pathways to economic opportunity.

- Placing a greater emphasis on work-based learning for youth, codifies and strengthens a program to help individuals released from incarceration transition back to employment and access career pathways, and strengthens workforce education programs at community colleges that align with in-demand jobs.

Fueling innovation for a skills-based economy.

- Establishing a demonstration authority to provide several states and local workforce boards the flexibility to reimagine their workforce system and innovate in pursuit of better outcomes.
- Facilitating skills-based hiring by validating workers' competencies gained through prior experience and authorizing state and local boards to provide technical assistance to employers on implementing skills-based hiring practices.

The full text of the bill can be found [here](#).