

Chambers of Commerce and Regional Business Organizations Unite in Support of Workforce Investment Act

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Business leaders across America in strong support of reauthorization

Washington, D.C. - - Chambers of Commerce and regional business organizations across America representing over 50,000 businesses sent a clear message to Congress through a letter of support for Workforce Investment Act (WIA) reauthorization.

The WIA authorizes more than 550 local business-led workforce investments boards (WIBs) that cover all fifty states, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Territories to oversee workforce development services through a network of 3,000 One-Stop Career Centers. Through WIA, local civic, business and workforce development leaders develop strategies that leverage funding and resources within their local communities to prepare and match the skills of workers with the workforce demands of companies.

The letter of support was sent to the Democratic and Republican leadership of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee which is currently considering reauthorization, and aligns with President Obama's recent commitment to developing weekly proposals to help businesses hire and put people back to work.

“We want to make sure that our Senators understand that reauthorizing WIA and investing in America's workers is a key priority for the business community,” said Gary Toeppen, president & chief executive officer of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce. “Businesses want to expand and create 21st century jobs, but we can't do that if we don't have a workforce with the skills and training needed to fill them”.

The support letter has been signed by more than 70 chambers and regional business organizations with support growing daily. CEO Laurie Moran, Danville Pittsylvania County Virginia Chamber of Commerce, is leading the charge with the Los Angeles

Area Chamber. “As a past chair of my local WIB, I can tell you that WIA funds and programs are critical to my community and regional economy,” said Moran. “Jobs and the economy should be a bi-partisan issue and this bill is exactly what we need to give businesses the support they need to create jobs.”

Moran currently serves as the chair for the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) in Washington, D.C.—an organization representing WIBs across the country. The NAWB and its members align with chambers and business organizations to engage them in making investment decisions; organizations that would like to support the WIA reauthorization can connect to NAWB’s Workforce Investment Works campaign and sign the letter at www.WorkforceInvestmentWorks.com

“The investment in employment growth is common sense considering the budget plight our nation confronts,” said Monica Bristow, President of the River Bend Growth Association. “The only antidote for our debt challenge is economic growth, powered by increasing the skills of America’s labor force and putting it back to work.”

The HELP Committee recently released a discussion draft of WIA reauthorization that has been developed in close consultation with the business community. Committee members are expected to bring this legislation before the full committee for a markup after the August recess.

To review and/or sign the letter of support, go to http://www.workforceinvestmentworks.com/wia_reauthorization_support.asp