



International Association of Workforce Professionals

March 17, 2008

Honorable Dave Obey
Chairman
Appropriations Committee
Rayburn House Office Building Room 2314
Independence Ave & S Capitol St SW
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Obey:

As you know, almost 8,000,000 Americans are unemployed and approximately 1,300,000 of them have been looking for work for more than six months. Unfortunately, the president's budget proposes to cut drastically the programs that support these American workers in their time of need. Worst of all, the president's budget proposes eliminating the Wagner Peysers Act's State Employment Service grants for the public labor exchange that help 13,000,000 American workers each year to seek and find employment and cuts by nearly 70% funding for labor market information upon which the public labor exchange and the entire national workforce system rely to function effectively.

**2007-2008
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The proposed FY 2009 budget would cut federal employment and training programs within the Department of Labor by 17% and vocational education and adult education programs at the Department of Education, another important part of the federal workforce system, by 69%. These and other federal workforce programs support working families at a time when our economy is failing them. The budget proposal also fails to provide the necessary additional resources to help the increasing number of workers who lose their jobs due to global competition and trade.

Specifically, Workforce Investment Act training funds for adults, youth and dislocated workers would be cut by a total of \$328 million, the federal Office of Disability Employment Policy would be cut by more than half, employment services to very low income older Americans would be cut by \$172 million, the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker job training program would be eliminated, Youthbuild would be cut by 15%, and training grants for youth in the criminal justice system would no longer be funded.

Last, but certainly not least, funding for state unemployment insurance administrative costs have been declining in recent years. This has required many state agencies to reduce staff and in some cases lay off personnel. The administration's budget proposal includes funding unemployment insurance administration at one hundred percent of the workload estimate. We are concerned that the current economic outlook, as evidenced most recently by the loss of 22,000 jobs in January and an additional 63,000 in February, underestimates the workload that state unemployment agencies will face in the coming months and needs to be revised.

Clearly, this budget is not what America's workers and their families want and need from their government in this weakening economy. We strongly urge you to fully fund the public labor exchange and labor market information services of the Wagner Peysers Act and to restore funding to the various other workforce programs proposed for reductions.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Laura M. Coburn
International President

Developing Professionals for Today and Tomorrow