



JOBS AND CAREERS COALITION

What. A Washington-based business coalition focused on job training and workforce development.

The context. According to the most recent figures, 6.5 million Americans are unemployed, but 6 million jobs stand empty in the U.S. today because employers can't find trained people to fill them. Growing skills mismatches leave companies in many sectors – manufacturing, construction and health care, among others – desperately short of needed workers. And millions of young people leave high school and college without the training they need to find work.

Incentives for employers to get involved. Today more than ever, it's understood: business has a vital role to play in planning and providing career training. Just how this involvement should be structured is a topic of much discussion and experimentation. Career and technical education, partnerships between employers and community colleges, internships and apprenticeships are just some of the possibilities. What's needed in Washington: recognition of this exciting ferment – and incentives for employers and educators to take it to the next level.

The coalition's goals. The Jobs and Careers Coalition focuses on four core goals: to shine new light on the need for workforce training, drive a skills agenda on Capitol Hill, highlight successful state initiatives and change national perceptions of technical careers and career training.

Our first two years. The coalition worked closely with lawmakers during the debate about the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The next step was providing input into the rulemaking process. Even more important: developing guidance for employers on how to navigate the federal workforce system once WIOA is implemented, making the most of the incentives and opportunities it creates for business owners. The coalition also hosts a regular dinner series with members of Congress interested in workforce issues. And coalition members have the opportunity to participate in public events highlighting the need for skills and skills training. For example, in January the coalition worked with the Senate CTE Caucus to host a briefing on Capitol Hill: CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION: THE EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVE.

Who participates in the coalition. Members include employers and employer associations from a broad range of industries experiencing worker shortages and skills mismatches – IT, manufacturing, construction and hospitality, among others.

Toward solutions. In the year ahead, the coalition looks forward to working with members of Congress to amend and reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act.

We're also looking for ways to get our ideas in front of the House Task Force on Poverty, Opportunity and Upward Mobility. Issues at the top of our agenda: federal incentives for businesses to get more involved in skills training, federal incentives for collaboration between educators and employers, federal recognition of industry-driven skills credentials and reforming Title IV education funding to help more Americans pay for career and technical training.

How the coalition is structured. Membership is open to trade associations and companies, large and small. The group meets on an as-need basis in Washington, with telephonic access for members based beyond the beltway. A steering committee provides direction and works to build consensus on policy. Opportunity America provides administrative support.

High stakes for the nation. Worker shortages, skills mismatches, the need for better workforce training and better policy that creates incentives for educators and employers to collaborate on up-to-date training: all are critical issues for business. But they also hold the key to two of the most pressing challenges facing the nation: maintaining our competitive edge in an ever-changing global economy and ensuring upward mobility for Americans who will be entering the labor market in years ahead. Growing awareness of these challenges is driving new ideas among Democrats and Republicans. A top goal of the coalition: to make sure the employer voice is heard as the nation moves forward on these critical issues. The stakes could hardly be higher. It's time for Americans to recommit to skills.

WHAT THE COALITION DOES

- Helps members stay abreast of emerging issues – problems and solutions
- Develops policy and provides input into pending legislation
- Builds relationships with legislative champions
- Spurs business consensus across industries
- Works to enact legislation that encourages more widespread business involvement in workforce development and career training

THE VALUE FOR MEMBERS

- Facilitated Hill access
- Information sharing
- Combined multi-industry influence
- Coordinated multi-industry communications and public relations
- Enhanced access to lawmakers, including at small off-the-record Capitol Hill policy dinners*

DUES

- Steering committee \$3,500
- Standard membership \$1,000

** Attendance at policy dinners will be assessed separately*

Opportunity America is a Washington-based nonprofit promoting economic mobility – work, skills, careers, ownership and entrepreneurship for poor and working Americans. The organization works to advance more equal opportunity by influencing policymakers at the state and federal levels and encouraging engagement by civil society, including employers.