



Opening Statement

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION & LABOR

EDLABOR.HOUSE.GOV

The Hon. Robert C. "Bobby" Scott • Chairman

Opening Statement of Chairman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (VA-03)

House Committee on Education and Labor Full Committee Markup

H.R. 8294 – *National Apprenticeship Act of 2020*

Hybrid In-person /ZoomGov

Thursday, September 24, 2020 | 10:15am

Today, we are marking up H.R. 8294, the *National Apprenticeship Act of 2020*, a comprehensive proposal to reauthorize and modernize the *National Apprenticeship Act* for the first time since its enactment in 1937.

Registered Apprenticeships are America's most successful workforce development initiative. According to the Department of Labor, 94 percent of Registered Apprenticeship participants are employed upon completion, earning an average yearly starting wage of \$70,000.

There is no better time than now to invest in this proven program to help people get back to work as tens of millions of workers continue to receive unemployment checks each week. Further, recent research estimates that more than 7 million of the jobs lost during this pandemic will be permanent.

The national apprenticeship system is well-suited to meet our current challenges. Apprentices begin earning wages on their first day of training and go on to develop in-demand skills and a nationally portable credential that is universally recognized by employers across the country.

The *National Apprenticeship Act of 2020* will help accelerate our economic recovery from this pandemic by creating nearly 1 million apprenticeship opportunities beyond the expected growth of the system over the next five years.

This proposal expands apprenticeships in three ways:

First, it codifies and streamlines standards for Registered Apprenticeship, youth apprenticeship, and pre-apprenticeship programs. This will make it easier for both apprentices and employers to participate in apprenticeship programs, while ensuring that all programs maintain the quality standards and worker protections that are essential to their success.

Second, it permanently codifies the Department of Labor's (DOL) Office of Apprenticeship, and directs the office to convene industry leaders, labor organizations, educators, and others to expand apprenticeships into new occupations and sectors. According to the Harvard Business Review, there are at least 47 occupations – that have traditionally required a four-year degree – that would benefit from creating new apprenticeship programs in addition to the 1,200 occupations that are already in place and apprentice-able.

Finally, the *National Apprenticeship Act of 2020* invests more than \$3.5 billion in the national apprenticeship system over the next five years. This investment will not only deliver incredible returns for workers and businesses. It also has returns for taxpayers: roughly \$10.6 billion in net benefits through increased tax revenues and decreased spending on public-assistance programs and unemployment insurance.

This reauthorization of the *National Apprenticeship Act* should be bipartisan. Both Democrats *and* Republicans agree on the urgent need to expand access to quality apprenticeship opportunities. This bill is the product of four hearings as well as bipartisan roundtables and months of legislative negotiations between the Majority and Minority staff.

Unfortunately, at the last minute, the Department of Labor interfered by demanding that this bill include an extraordinary provision.

The Department made clear that they would not support the bill unless the administration was granted unchecked authority to expend funds on any apprenticeship program they want to promote. This demand was never part of the agreement between the Majority and Minority, which agreed to strengthen Registered Apprenticeships, when negotiations began.

I am disappointed that this demand has undermined what was, until then, a promising bipartisan effort.

If the Department's proposed language had been included, the Administration would have had the legal authority to misdirect funding from the proven Registered Apprenticeship program for an untested apprenticeship system – the Industry Recognized Apprenticeship Program, or IRAP – without adequate worker protections or quality standards.

As we learned from a hearing last November, the Department has already misdirected appropriated funds for Registered Apprenticeship programs into IRAPs.

I call on my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to prioritize the needs of our constituents by advancing the *National Apprenticeship Act of 2020*. I now yield to the Ranking Member, Dr. Foxx, for the purpose of an opening statement.