



March 5, 2013

Americans Need Good Jobs:

Support a Bipartisan Reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act Oppose H.R. 803, the Supporting Knowledge and Investing in Lifelong Skills Act (SKILLS Act)

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The Honorable John Kline
Chairman
Committee on Education and the
Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable George Miller
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and the
Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kline and Ranking Member Miller:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of over 210 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States, we urge you to **oppose The SKILLS Act, H.R. 803**. We urge you to reject the bill because it does not meet the standard of our shared priority to upgrade and modernize job training and education programs in order to meet the dire needs of both prospective workers and employers. We hope that the committee will work across party lines to draft a Workforce Investment Act (WIA) reauthorization bill consistent with everyone's shared goals.

The Leadership Conference believes it is imperative that all Americans have an opportunity to acquire the education and training needed to earn a living wage and to contribute to our nation's economy. We need to grow our economy, prepare more skilled workers, and provide a pathway to the American dream for all persons in the United States. At the same time, we must work with public and private-sector employers to ensure our system is producing skilled workers to fill current and projected needs.

H.R. 803 will result in significant reductions in high-quality education, job training, and supportive services to the most disadvantaged populations, including disconnected youth, persons living in high-poverty communities, minorities, women, seniors, persons with disabilities, those recently incarcerated, single parents, veterans and those who lack English proficiency or a high school diploma or equivalent credential. We are especially concerned that the bill would block-grant targeted programs that help those most in need and who would benefit the greatest from

education and workforce services. In addition, we oppose the bill's proposal to alter the composition of local workforce boards to give employers a 2/3 supermajority.

The time to reauthorize WIA is now. WIA needs to become an efficient, responsive and effective federal program that aids our economic recovery by providing pathways out of poverty for the unemployed as well as underemployed, and by meeting the skills and knowledge demands of the 21st century workforce. Instead of rushing through a bill without bipartisan support, the committee should craft legislation that meets the needs of both those lacking the skills necessary to enter a competitive workforce, and employers.

We are united in our belief that we need and *can achieve* a balanced, bipartisan approach to updating our federal education and workforce development programs, including WIA. We urge you to vote "no" on the SKILLS Act. If you have any questions, please contact Dianne Piché, senior counsel, at Piche@civilrights.org or 202-466-3311.

Sincerely,



Wade Henderson
President & CEO



Nancy Zirkin
Executive Vice President