

Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Reauthorization



Reauthorize WIA to Help Individuals Become Self-Sufficient

"With injuries [from an accident], I could no longer work as a roofer. Then I found out about Goodwill and enrolled in its work adjustment training program. After one week in the training course, I received my first paycheck in five years." – Charlie Sheets

The Challenge

As the nation slowly recovers from the highest unemployment rates experienced in a generation, job creation is a high priority for policy-makers. In the meantime, programs authorized under the Workforce Investment Act 13 years ago — a time when unemployment was much higher than it is now — struggle to keep pace with increasing demand despite steadily dwindling resources.

While the workforce system has done much under difficult circumstances to mitigate the damage that the recession has inflicted on our nation's workforce, there are a number of provisions in WIA that need to be updated to meet the diverse needs of workers and employers.

As the nation continues to recover economically, Congress must make reauthorizing WIA a high priority.

What are the Workforce Investment Act and the Rehabilitation Act?

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 (Public Law 105-220) integrates several federal employment and training programs, and is the primary workforce development vehicle of the U.S. Department of Labor. WIA was designed to create a universal system of one-stop career centers to provide access to training and employment services for a range of workers, including adults and youth with low-incomes, dislocated workers, and people with disabilities. A central one-stop career center provides core employment services to job seekers and meets the needs of employers. The Rehabilitation Act (Title IV of WIA) is the primary program assisting individuals with disabilities — including individuals with the most severe disabilities — to secure employment.

WIA and Goodwill Industries

Goodwill Industries® is the largest provider of services in the workforce investment system. In 2010, more than 2.4 million people benefited from Goodwill's workforce development services, including more than 170,000 who were placed in jobs. Goodwill employed nearly 97,000 people in its retail, commercial services and other social enterprises.

Goodwill Industries invests 84 percent of its privately raised funds (approximately \$4.03 billion) in its workforce programs and services. This investment of more than \$3 billion eclipses the federal government's funding for WIA's adult, youth, and dislocated worker programs.

In 2009 alone, approximately 160,000 people were referred to Goodwill for employment services through WIA and state vocational rehabilitation agencies. Goodwill agencies operate one-stop centers to provide skills training, job placement and job retention services to people with employment challenges including people with disabilities, people who receive welfare, and other job seekers. Many Goodwill agencies are lead one-stop operators, or operators in association with other service providers, and are active on state and local workforce boards. These boards aim to offer guidance for training programs that will meet the requirements of local employers.

Goodwill's Recommendations for WIA Reauthorization

Goodwill looks forward to working with Congress to develop a bipartisan reauthorization bill that invests in the future of the nation's workforce while helping individuals obtain the job skills they need to become self-sufficient, and meet the needs of businesses nationwide.

Goodwill held focus groups of its membership across the country in the development of WIA reauthorization recommendations and urges Congress to maintain funding levels for the act and to improve federal support for both workers and employers by:

- Including community-based organizations in one-stop career center operations and local workforce investment efforts. The inclusion of entrepreneurial organizations like Goodwill would improve the quality of innovative solutions to local and regional issues needed by employers as well as working learners' access to education and support services.
- Creating a separate line item for infrastructure so that a greater percentage of WIA program resources could be devoted to pay for training in addition to, rather than at the expense of WIA's already inadequate existing funding streams.
- Facilitating collaborative, innovative, proactive responses to local and regional workforce and economic development issues by including governance for community-based organizations.
- Promoting employment opportunities in the growing employment sectors, such as green jobs, which include recycling, computer refurbishing and green building construction.
- Delivering quality services to populations

that are harder to serve, such as individuals with disabilities, people who are chronically unemployed, individuals on welfare, and people with criminal backgrounds.

- Creating a dedicated funding stream to support youth with disabilities who are transitioning from special education into adult life.

Action Requested

Goodwill urges Congress to reauthorize WIA this year.

About Goodwill®

Goodwill generates opportunities for people to achieve economic stability and build strong families and vibrant communities by offering job training, employment placement services and other community-based programs for people who have disabilities, lack education or job experience, or face other employment challenges. In 2010, approximately 170,000 people obtained meaningful employment as a result of Goodwill career services programs. Collectively, these employees earned \$2.7 billion in salaries and wages and contributed to their communities as productive, tax-paying citizens.

For more information, contact the Goodwill Industries International public policy team:

Seth Turner, Senior Director of Government Affairs & Public Policy
(240) 333-5508, seth.turner@goodwill.org

Laura Walling, Director of Advocacy & Legislative Affairs
(240) 333-5378, laura.walling@goodwill.org

Jordan Abushawish, Public Policy Specialist
(240) 333-5259, jordan.abushawish@goodwill.org