

108TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 2649

To amend the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to authorize the Secretary of Labor to provide for 5-year pilot projects to establish a system of industry-validated national certifications of skills in high-technology industries and a cross-disciplinary national certification of skills in homeland security technology.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 13, 2004

Mr. BINGAMAN introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To amend the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to authorize the Secretary of Labor to provide for 5-year pilot projects to establish a system of industry-validated national certifications of skills in high-technology industries and a cross-disciplinary national certification of skills in homeland security technology.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Workforce Investment
5 for Next-Generation Technologies Act” or the “WING
6 Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds the following:

3 (1) Science- and technology-based industries
4 have been and will continue to be engines of United
5 States economic growth and national security.

6 (2) The United States faces great challenges in
7 the global economy from nations with highly trained
8 technical workforces.

9 (3) Occupations requiring technical and sci-
10 entific training are projected to grow rapidly over
11 the next decade, at 3 times the rate of all occupa-
12 tions (according to Science & Engineering Indica-
13 tors, 2002).

14 (4) The need for trained technology workers in
15 national security fields has increased as a result of
16 the events of September 11, 2001.

17 (5) National certification systems are well es-
18 tablished and accepted in fields such as health and
19 information technology and have succeeded in at-
20 tracting more workers into those fields.

21 (6) Business and workers could both be well
22 served by expanding the certification concept to
23 other high technology industries.

24 (7) National certification systems allow workers
25 to develop skills transportable to other States in re-
26 sponse to layoffs and other economic changes.

1 (8) National certification systems facilitate
2 interstate comparisons of education and training
3 programs and help identify best practices and reduce
4 cost and development redundancies.

5 (9) National certification systems promote qual-
6 ity and encourage educational institutions to mod-
7 ernize programs to ensure graduates pass industry-
8 required exams.

9 (10) National certification based on industry-
10 validated skill standards introduces stricter account-
11 ability for technical and vocational education pro-
12 grams.

13 (11) Certification signals value to employers
14 and increases applicants' employability.

15 (12) Certification offers a planned skill develop-
16 ment route into employment or professional advance-
17 ment for working adults and displaced workers.

18 (13) The National Science Foundation's Ad-
19 vanced Technological Education Program, author-
20 ized by Congress in 1992, has created national cen-
21 ters of excellence at community colleges that have
22 established unique linkages with industry to prepare
23 individuals for the technical workforce under the
24 program.

1 (14) The Advanced Technological Education
2 Program should be expanded to all institutions of
3 higher education, as the Nation should invest more
4 resources in training and education programs that
5 are responsive to marketplace needs.

6 (15) The one-stop delivery systems authorized
7 under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 have
8 proved to be effective providers of information and
9 resources for job seekers.

10 (16) The one-stop delivery systems offer special
11 opportunities for directing displaced workers to cer-
12 tification programs that build skills for technical
13 fields where rewarding jobs are plentiful.

14 **SEC. 3. PURPOSES.**

15 The purposes of this Act are as follows:

16 (1) To increase the numbers of workers edu-
17 cated for employment in high technology industries.

18 (2) To align the technical and vocational pro-
19 grams of educational institutions with the workforce
20 needs of high-growth, next generation industries.

21 (3) To offer individuals expanded opportunities
22 for rapid training and retraining in portable skills
23 needed to keep and change jobs in a volatile econ-
24 omy.

1 (4) To provide United States businesses with
2 adequate numbers of skilled technical workers.

3 (5) To encourage a student's or worker's
4 progress toward an advanced degree while providing
5 training, education, and useful credentials for work-
6 force entry or reentry.

7 **SEC. 4. SKILL CERTIFICATION PILOT PROJECTS.**

8 Section 171 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998
9 (29 U.S.C. 2916) is amended by adding at the end the
10 following:

11 “(e) SKILL CERTIFICATION PILOT PROJECTS.—

12 “(1) PILOT PROJECTS.—In accordance with
13 subsection (b), the Secretary of Labor shall establish
14 and carry out not more than 20 pilot projects to es-
15 tablish a system of industry-validated national cer-
16 tifications of skills, including—

17 “(A) not more than 16 national certifi-
18 cations of skills in high-technology industries,
19 including biotechnology, telecommunications,
20 highly automated manufacturing (including
21 semiconductors), advanced materials tech-
22 nology, nanotechnology, and energy technology
23 (including technology relating to next-genera-
24 tion lighting); and

1 “(B) not more than 4 cross-disciplinary
2 national certifications of skills in homeland se-
3 curity technology.

4 “(2) GRANTS TO ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—In car-
5 rying out the pilot projects, the Secretary of Labor
6 shall make grants to eligible entities, for periods of
7 not less than 36 months and not more than 48
8 months, to carry out the authorized activities de-
9 scribed in paragraph (7) with respect to the certifi-
10 cations described in paragraph (1).

11 “(3) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—

12 “(A) DEFINITION OF ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—

13 In this subsection, the term ‘eligible entity’
14 means an entity that shall include as a prin-
15 cipal participant one or more of the following:

16 “(i) An institution of higher education
17 (as defined in section 101 or 102 of the
18 Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.
19 1001, 1002)).

20 “(ii) An advanced technology edu-
21 cation center.

22 “(iii) A local workforce investment
23 board.

1 “(iv) A representative of a business in
2 a target industry for the certification in-
3 volved.

4 “(v) A representative of an industry
5 association, labor organization, or commu-
6 nity development organization.

7 “(B) HISTORY OF DEMONSTRATED CAPA-
8 BILITY REQUIRED.—To be eligible to receive a
9 grant under this subsection, an eligible entity
10 shall have a history of demonstrated capability
11 for effective collaboration with industry on
12 workforce development activities that is con-
13 sistent with the goals of this Act.

14 “(4) APPLICATIONS.—To be eligible to receive a
15 grant under this subsection, an eligible entity shall
16 submit an application to the Secretary of Labor at
17 such time, in such manner, and containing such in-
18 formation as the Secretary may require.

19 “(5) CRITERIA.—The Secretary of Labor shall
20 establish criteria, consistent with paragraph (6), for
21 awarding grants under this subsection.

22 “(6) PRIORITY.—In selecting eligible entities to
23 receive grants under this subsection, the Secretary
24 of Labor shall give priority to eligible entities that
25 demonstrate the availability of and ability to provide

1 matching funds from industry or nonprofit sources.
 2 Such matching funds may be provided in cash or in
 3 kind.

4 “(7) AUTHORIZED ACTIVITIES.—

5 “(A) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity that
 6 receives a grant under this subsection shall use
 7 the funds made available through the grant—

8 “(i) to establish certification require-
 9 ments for a certification described in para-
 10 graph (1) for an industry;

11 “(ii) to develop and initiate a certifi-
 12 cation program that includes preparatory
 13 courses, course materials, procedures, and
 14 examinations, for the certification; and

15 “(iii) to collect and analyze data re-
 16 lated to the program at the program’s
 17 completion, and to identify best practices
 18 (consistent with paragraph (8)) that may
 19 be used by local and State workforce in-
 20 vestment boards in the future.

21 “(B) BASIS FOR REQUIREMENTS.—The
 22 certification requirements shall be based on ap-
 23 plicable skill standards for the industry involved
 24 that have been developed by or linked to na-
 25 tional centers of excellence under the National

1 Science Foundation's Advanced Technological
2 Education Program. The requirements shall re-
3 quire an individual to demonstrate an identifi-
4 able set of competencies relevant to the industry
5 in order to receive certification. The require-
6 ments shall be designed to provide evidence of
7 a transferable skill set that allows flexibility and
8 mobility of workers within a high technology in-
9 dustry.

10 “(C) RELATIONSHIP TO TRAINING AND
11 EDUCATION PROGRAMS.—The eligible entity
12 shall ensure that—

13 “(i) a training and education program
14 related to competencies for the industry in-
15 volved, that is flexible in mode and time-
16 frame for delivery and that meets the
17 needs of those seeking the certification, is
18 offered; and

19 “(ii) the certification program is of-
20 fered at the completion of the training and
21 education program.

22 “(D) RELATIONSHIP TO THE ASSOCIATE
23 DEGREE.—The eligible entity shall ensure that
24 the certification program is consistent with the
25 requirements for a 2-year associate degree.

1 “(E) AVAILABILITY.—The eligible entity
2 shall ensure that the certification program is
3 open to students pursuing associate degrees,
4 employed workers, and displaced workers.

5 “(8) CONSULTATION.—The Secretary of Labor
6 shall consult with the Director of the National
7 Science Foundation and the Secretary of Education
8 to ensure that the pilot projects build on the exper-
9 tise and information about best practices gained
10 through the implementation of the National Science
11 Foundation’s Advanced Technological Education
12 Program.

13 “(9) CORE COMPONENTS; GUIDELINES; RE-
14 PORTS.—After collecting and analyzing the data ob-
15 tained from the pilot programs, the Secretary of
16 Labor shall—

17 “(A) establish the core components of a
18 model high-technology certification program;

19 “(B) establish guidelines to assure develop-
20 ment of a uniform set of standards and policies
21 for such programs;

22 “(C) submit and prepare a report on the
23 pilot projects to the Committee on Health, Edu-
24 cation, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate and

1 the Committee on Education and the Workforce
2 of the House of Representatives; and

3 “(D) make available to the public both the
4 data and the report.

5 “(10) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

6 In addition to amounts authorized to be appro-
7 priated under section 174(b), there is authorized to
8 be appropriated \$60,000,000 for fiscal year 2005 to
9 carry out this subsection.”.

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