

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 809

To establish a program to provide tuition assistance to individuals who have lost their jobs as a result of the economic downturn.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 2, 2009

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

A BILL

To establish a program to provide tuition assistance to individuals who have lost their jobs as a result of the economic downturn.

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 “Assistance for Work-
5 force Recovery Program Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.**

7 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following find-
8 ings:

1 (1) In today's global economy, employees must
2 possess the education and training necessary to
3 adapt to change and learn new skills.

4 (2) Community colleges provide high quality
5 education to students and support to businesses and
6 employers.

7 (3) Community colleges collaborate with local
8 and regional businesses, industry, workforce invest-
9 ment boards, and economic development organiza-
10 tions to tailor their educational programs to deliver
11 employers a workforce with the skills employers
12 need. Workers receiving customized training have in-
13 creased job performance productivity and the work-
14 force is stronger and more competitive as a result.

15 (4) Community-based job training grants were
16 created as part of the fiscal year 2005 budget of the
17 President.

18 (5) The purpose of community-based job train-
19 ing grants is to assist community colleges in training
20 workers to develop the skills required by employers
21 in high-growth industries and occupations where de-
22 mand for qualified workers outstrips the supply.

23 (6) Given the high level of unemployment as a
24 result of the economic downturn, the supply of labor
25 now greatly outpaces demand in many industries.

1 (7) According to the National Bureau of Eco-
 2 nomic Research, the current economic recession
 3 began in December of 2007.

4 (b) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this Act to estab-
 5 lish a tuition assistance program for qualifying workers
 6 who become unemployed as a result of the recent economic
 7 recession to enable those workers to obtain education and
 8 training to contribute to the economic recovery.

9 **SEC. 3. WORKFORCE RECOVERY PROGRAM.**

10 Section 171 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1988
 11 (29 U.S.C. 2916) is amended by adding at the end the
 12 following:

13 “(f) UNEMPLOYMENT TUITION ASSISTANCE PRO-
 14 GRAM.—

15 “(1) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

16 “(A) COMMUNITY COLLEGE.—The term
 17 ‘community college’ means a 2-year institution
 18 of higher education as defined in section 101 of
 19 the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.
 20 1001).

21 “(B) ECONOMIC DOWNTURN.—The term
 22 ‘economic downturn’ means the recession that
 23 the National Bureau of Economic Research de-
 24 termined began on December 1, 2007 in the
 25 United States.

1 “(C) PROGRAM.—The term ‘Program’
2 means the Unemployment Tuition Assistance
3 Program established under paragraph (2).

4 “(D) SECRETARY.—The term ‘Secretary’
5 means the Secretary of Labor.

6 “(2) UNEMPLOYMENT TUITION ASSISTANCE.—

7 “(A) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 60
8 days after the date of enactment of this sub-
9 section, the Secretary shall establish a vol-
10 untary pilot program under this section to be
11 known as the ‘Unemployment Tuition Assist-
12 ance Program’ to provide tuition assistance to
13 eligible individuals to enable such individuals to
14 obtain education and job training assistance.

15 “(B) NOTIFICATION.—

16 “(i) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary
17 shall ensure that each State agency re-
18 sponsible for the administration of the
19 State unemployment compensation pro-
20 gram distribute to any individual in the
21 State who submits an application for un-
22 employment insurance a notification that
23 such individual may be eligible for partici-
24 pation in the Program and information on
25 how to apply for such participation.

“(ii) INTERNET WEBSITE.—The Secretary shall maintain a public Internet website that contains information about the Program, including a list of participating community colleges.

“(iii) PARTICIPATING COMMUNITY COLLEGES.—Nothing in clause (i) shall be construed to prevent a participating community college from advertising the existence of the Program or otherwise informing individuals of such Program.

“(C) ELIGIBILITY.—

“(i) ELIGIBILITY OF INDIVIDUALS.—

“(I) GENERAL ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible to receive a certification of eligibility from a participating community college for tuition assistance under the Program, an individual shall—

“(aa) submit to the participating community college an application, in a manner prescribed by the Secretary;

“(bb) be an individual and who became unemployed (as de-

scribed in subclause (II)(aa)) on
 or after December 1, 2007, and
 whose employment loss resulted
 from the economic downturn;

“(cc) be determined to be el-
 igible by a participating commu-
 nity college as provided for in
 subclause (II); and

“(dd) comply with any
 guidelines issued by the Sec-
 retary (in consultation with the
 Secretary of Education) or the
 participating community college
 involved, so long as such guide-
 lines are not inconsistent with
 the requirements of subclause
 (II).

“(II) DETERMINATIONS BY COL-
 LEGE.—An individual shall not be cer-
 tified as an eligible individual under
 subclause (I)(cc) unless the partici-
 pating community college involved de-
 termines that—

“(aa) the individual has
 been involuntarily terminated,

1 laid off, or has had his or her
2 work hours reduced to zero;

3 “(bb) the termination, layoff
4 or reduction in hours described in
5 item (aa) occurred on or after
6 December 1, 2007; and

7 “(cc) the termination, layoff
8 or reduction in hours described in
9 item (aa) is the result of job loss
10 related to the economic down-
11 turn.

12 “(ii) ELIGIBILITY OF ENTITIES.—To
13 be eligible to be a participating community
14 college under the program, an entity
15 shall—

16 “(I) be a community college; and

17 “(II) submit to the Secretary an
18 application for a certification of par-
19 ticipation at such time, in such man-
20 ner, and containing such information
21 as the Secretary may require.

22 “(iii) ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE.—The
23 Secretary may provide additional assist-
24 ance to a community college submitting an
25 application under clause (ii) if the Sec-

retary determines, as soon as practicable after receipt of the application, that the college—

“(I) is located in a high need area (as determined by the Secretary); and

“(II) is located in an underserved area (as determined by the Secretary).

“(D) USE OF ASSISTANCE.—Assistance received under the Program shall be used to pay the costs for enrollment in classes or job training programs offered at a participating community college.

“(E) AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—Subject to clause (ii), an individual participating in the Program shall receive tuition assistance in an amount that does not exceed—

“(I) the tuition costs for enrollment in one semester of classes offered by a participating community college; or

“(II) the cost of participation in a job training program offered by a participating community college.

1 “(ii) LIMITATION.—The amount of as-
2 sistance provided under clause (i) (whether
3 for enrollment in classes or a job training
4 program) shall not exceed an amount equal
5 to the cost of enrollment in 12 credits
6 worth of classes at the participating com-
7 munity college but in no event to exceed
8 \$1,000.

9 “(iii) ADDITIONAL BENEFITS.—The
10 Secretary may provide for the awarding of
11 additional assistance to individuals or par-
12 ticipating community colleges under the
13 Program for use in areas of high unem-
14 ployment or in underserved rural popu-
15 lations, as determined by the Secretary.

16 “(F) PAYMENT.—The Secretary shall es-
17 tablish guidelines for making assistance pay-
18 ments under the Program. Such guidelines shall
19 provide that payments shall be made directly to
20 the participating community college involved
21 based on the number of eligible individuals cer-
22 tified by such college for the period involved.

23 “(G) PROVISION FOR QUALITY EDU-
24 CATION.—The Secretary shall issue guidelines
25 to participating community colleges that are de-

1 signed to ensure the quality of education and
2 job training for which eligible individuals will be
3 awarded credit under the program under this
4 Act.

5 “(H) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—Not
6 later than February 1, and July 1, of each year
7 in which this subsection is in effect, the Sec-
8 retary shall submit to Congress a report con-
9 cerning the program under this subsection that
10 includes—

11 “(i) the names and locations of par-
12 ticipating community colleges;

13 “(ii) the number of students partici-
14 pating at each such college;

15 “(iii) the number of credits awarded
16 by each such college under the program;
17 and

18 “(iv) the amount of expenditures by
19 the Secretary under such program.

20 “(3) FUNDING.—The Secretary shall use
21 amounts available under section 414(c) of the Amer-
22 ican Competitiveness and Workforce Improvement
23 Act of 1998 (29 U.S.C. 2916a) to carry out this
24 subsection.

- 1 “(4) SUNSET.—The Program shall terminate
2 on December 31, 2011.”.

