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Consolidated and Reformed Workforce Development and Literacy Act (1976): Speech 23

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SKILL GRANTS/VOUCHERS/CAREER GRANTS

HOUSE BILL: The House CAREERS ACT, HR 1617, contains a requirement which would mandate that all adult training activities would be delivered through the use of individual skill grants. These skill grants would be used by the adult to seek out the provider they felt best offered the training and skill development they needed to further their respective employment opportunities.

SENATE BILL: The Senate’s, S.143, the Workforce Development Act, established the use of a skill grant for the delivery of adult training services as a permissible activity by the local systems. If a local system chose to establish a skill grant/voucher system then the adult seeking to use the skill grant must be unable to acquire a Pell Grant.

SENATE GOP PROPOSAL: Senator Kassebaum has strongly opposed the mandating of activities within the training system. She has reluctantly proposed that a mandated pilot skill grant program be established in every State. The pilot would be required to be of "sufficient size, scope and quality" to establish a sufficient base of information to determine the effectiveness of the skill grant. There would be no floor or ceiling on the size of the pilot.

If a concern of the skill grant issue is the program would get too big too fast then this pilot does nothing to limit the potential size. There are currently over 35 million adults eligible for training services.

SENATE AND HOUSE DEMOCRAT’S AND ADMINISTRATION’S PROPOSAL: A program should be designed which would establish a mandatory skill grant program for dislocated workers. The proposed structure would require that each state make available skill grant to those qualified dislocated workers who are unable to be successfully placed through the core services available in the One-Stops.

TALKING POINTS: Providing a clear empowerment of the individual strikes to the heart of this proposal. If the premise that the Federally created system does not know as much about the individual as the dislocated worker does then the creation of this skill grant as an additional tool builds on the strength of the individual’s desire to succeed.

The legislation has incorporated a strengthened system of integrity measures designed to gauge the success individual providers have in assisting participants in completing their programs, being placed in unsubsidized employment, compensation levels, and the retention of their jobs over a period of time. Through the One-Stop system the eligible dislocated workers will be able to access consumer information on which they can base their decisions for choosing a particular provider.
It is clear that a skill grant for services is not going to be the preferred choice for all eligible dislocated workers. They may choose to pursue other job leads or feel that their current skills will lead to employment at another time or in another location.

Narrowing the requirements of the program to those eligible dislocated workers would establish some limits to the size and scope of the program. As opposed to the 35 million adults eligible for current adult training services there are estimated to be 2.5 million dislocated workers nationwide. The Administration estimates that approximately 200,000 of those receiving services would choose to actually use the voucher system. The dislocated workers eligible to use these skill grants would be an older and more experienced group of individuals as compared to the general adult population. This demographic composition would serve as an additional tool in protecting against unscrupulous schools and providers who might be seeking to exploit those seeking assistance.