Consolidated and Reformed Workforce Development and Literacy Act (1976): Correspondence 03

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The Honorable Paul Simon
United States Senate
462 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-1301

Dear Senator Simon:

I am writing to alert you to my concerns regarding the job training consolidation legislation now pending in conference committee.

The House and Senate have approved separate bills to overhaul the nation's employment training and adult education system. It is my understanding that House and Senate conferees may be nearing an agreement on language that would virtually eliminate the role of the mayor or chief local elected official. Such action would be detrimental to state and local governments, service providers and clients, and seriously handicap the effectiveness of a locally-based job training system. The City of Chicago opposes any reduction in the role of the mayor and the chief local elected official in the new workforce development legislation.

The chief local elected official has traditionally played a strong role in shaping these programs and services. No two communities will face exactly the same set of problems nor arrive at exactly the same mix of solutions. It is absolutely imperative that the chief local elected official have the authority to review and approve local plans and budgets, and the ability to review and evaluate locally operated job training and employment programs. Specifically, the final conference package should provide:

1. Strong local workforce development boards with overall policy responsibility for workforce development programs operating in their areas; and
2. Strong involvement of the chief local elected official, including:

- authority to appoint local workforce development board members;

- review and approval of local workforce development plans, budgets and one-stop systems; and

- review and evaluation authority with local workforce development boards for locally operating job training and employment programs.

I have long supported Congressional efforts to reform and consolidate education and training programs into a coherent, comprehensive national workforce development system. However, if it is to be effective, the workforce development system must be capable of responding to local needs and labor market conditions. The role of the chief local official will be absolutely critical.

Thank you for your attention and commitment on this important matter.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Mayor