

# Work force training programs critical to state's economy

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By U.S. Rep. Brett Guthrie In My View | [0 comments](#)

Before coming to Congress, I spent 18 years working at my family's manufacturing facility in Bowling Green. I saw first-hand how additional training and education can lift a worker into a high-wage, highly skilled job. Not only do workers then bring home more income, it lifts their families into the middle class and allows them to invest more in the local community.

When I came to Washington after being elected as your representative, I was selected to serve as the top Republican on the Higher Education Subcommittee, which has jurisdiction over work force issues. Given my interest in this important topic, one of the first bills I introduced was the Workforce Investment Improvement Act, which sought to revise and reauthorize our federal job training programs.

For the last five years, I have been a champion of reauthorizing the Workforce Investment Act and have highlighted the critical role these programs play in lifting workers into the middle class. This week the House is planning to vote on a bipartisan, bicameral agreement to reauthorize WIA. This will be the first reauthorization of these important programs in more than 15 years.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act will streamline a complicated web of programs and mandates, give states greater flexibility, reduce bureaucracy and administrative costs and promote skills training for in-demand jobs — all while introducing a heightened level of accountability over taxpayer dollars.

By streamlining programs and giving greater flexibility for states and localities to focus dollars on their unique needs, we can make the most of our resources. The bill also helps get workers into training faster and ensures that local businesses are involved in the process, which gets workers trained and placed in jobs more easily. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that more than 4 million job openings remain unfilled — despite the roughly 10 million Americans who are unemployed and actively seeking employment.

I consistently hear from Kentucky employers who need workers, but few have the skills needed for the job. By bridging this gap, we can ensure those ready to work are able to fill the positions available in their community, and ensure our local economies continue to grow.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act is a strong piece of legislation that will help provide workers with the opportunity to gain the skills and training that today's work force needs and get Americans back to work. We must be arming workers with the skills needed to move into higher-paying jobs and succeed in this more advanced economy.

I am proud to have been a part of this effort to reauthorize and update our nation's work force training programs, and look forward to seeing this come to fruition.

***Brett Guthrie is U.S. representative for Kentucky's 2nd congressional district.***