
EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

Tuesday, May 05, 2009
Press Office, 202-226-0853

**Chairman Hinojosa Statement At Subcommittee Hearing On
New Innovations and Best Practices under the Workforce
Investment Act**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. Rubén Hinojosa (D-TX), chairman of the House Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness, for a subcommittee field hearing on “New Innovations and Best Practices Under the Workforce Investment Act.”*

Good Morning. Welcome to the Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness Subcommittee’s fourth hearing in preparation for the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act. As with our previous hearings, we are going to focus on new innovations and best practices that will improve the workforce development system. Today, we will turn our attention to the adult education and family literacy programs that are authorized under Title II of the Act.

We are facing the greatest world economic crisis since the Great Depression. We need to re-tool our economy and that starts with investing in our people. The President made clear his commitment when he set the goal of returning the United States to number one in the world in producing college graduates. He also issued a challenge to every American to commit to at least one year of college or advanced training.

Adult education programs provide us the bridge to achieving the President’s goals. Unfortunately, today, this bridge does not have the capacity to do the job. According to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, an estimated 93 million adults lack sufficient literacy skills to enroll in postsecondary education or training.

Funding for adult education has actually declined. Today, the adult education state grant program is funded at \$554 million, roughly \$20 million less than funding level for fiscal year 2004. These low levels of funding mean that we are only able to reach an estimated 2 to 4 percent of the population that needs adult education services.

In 2008, 2.3 million adults participated in federally supported adult education programs. Of this total, roughly 1 million participated in English as a second language programs; nearly another million enrolled in basic education programs for adults with reading and

math levels below the eighth grade; and the rest were enrolled in secondary education programs that lead to a GED. The adult education programs have also played a critical role in helping adult immigrants learn English and learn about American society and government. \$68 million of the adult state grant formula is dedicated to integrated English as a second language and civics programs. There are long wait lists for all of the adult education services.

Our challenge for the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act is to develop innovative models that will significantly expand our capacity to deliver adult education. We need to fully develop the talents of our entire population. We cannot afford to write off 93 million adults. Therefore, we need a targeted and focused strategy to build a bridge to postsecondary education, advanced training and a better quality of life for adults.

Today's panel brings together experts in the field of adult education – including the most important experts of all – adult learners who have been able to achieve their goals through adult education programs. I would like to thank you witnesses for joining us today. I am looking forward to your testimony.

I now yield to the Ranking Member, Mr. Brett Guthrie of Kentucky, for his opening statement.

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