

**STATEMENT OF**  
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**COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE**  
**U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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**Introduction**

Chairman Kline, Ranking Member Miller and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify about the work we are doing at the Department of Labor (DOL). As always, it is a pleasure to be back among my friends and former colleagues. This is now my third time testifying before this committee. I think you have a good understanding of where I come from and what our priorities are at the Department. However, I always appreciate having the opportunity to update you on the Department's work and receive feedback from the Members of the committee so we can continue to work together to move America forward.

Since I was here over a year ago, much has changed and there are many indications that we are on the path to long-term economic recovery. It is useful to remind ourselves what a long way we have come. Before President Obama took office, 4.4 million jobs had been lost since the beginning of the recession. From the onset of the recession in December 2007 until the Recovery Act passed, we were losing an average of almost 370,000 per month; just under 820,000 jobs alone were lost in the month before the Recovery Act was passed in February 2009.

The national unemployment rate now stands at 8.3 percent, down from its October 2009 peak and the lowest since the Recovery Act was passed. Importantly, the recent drop in unemployment has been driven by employment gains, not workers leaving the labor force. We have created 3.9 million jobs in the private sector over the last 24 consecutive months.

America's labor market grew stronger in 2011. We created over 2 million private sector jobs, and the unemployment rate fell in 48 states. Additionally, the number of mass layoffs continued to decline, with 12 of 19 industries reporting a decrease in new claims associated with mass layoffs over the year. Now we are seeing sustained job growth across almost every industry. Similarly, the number of people starting new claims for unemployment benefits has been declining since last September and has receded to March 2008 levels. In 2009, we saw seven unemployed Americans for every job opening; that ratio is now under four to one. This is due to a combination of more hiring and a decline in layoffs.

There are other positive signs of our growing economic recovery. We have seen ten straight quarters of GDP growth. Private investment grew faster in 2011 than in the year before, and durable orders in the manufacturing sector have been trending upward. Also, the housing market is improving with building permits increasing sharply during the last six months, while personal spending continued to grow above pre-recession levels. We are creating jobs on a consistent basis, but we will not be satisfied until everyone who wants a job can find one. We know that 12.8 million Americans are unemployed and, of those, 43% of them are long-term unemployed. We also know that the recession hit some groups particularly hard and that the recovery has only recently started to reach many of these groups.

The unemployment rate of African Americans peaked at 16.7% as recently as August 2011, while the Hispanic unemployment rate peaked at 13.1% in November 2010. But over the past six months, as the national unemployment rate has fallen, the African American unemployment rate has dropped to 14.1% and the Hispanic unemployment rate to 10.7%. Despite these improvements, the unemployment rate is still high, and there is still much work that needs to be done.

To create an economy that is built to last, the President laid out a blueprint for growth that emphasizes strengthening American manufacturing, American energy, education, and skills training for workers in a way that is consistent with American values. Now is a make or break moment for the middle class and those trying to reach it. At stake is the very survival of the basic American promise that if you work hard, you can do well enough to raise a family, own a home, and put enough away for retirement. The best way to continue moving our nation forward is to work with Congress in a bipartisan manner to support meaningful policies that help our economy grow.

This Administration strongly supported a bipartisan extension of the payroll tax cut and emergency unemployment insurance benefits. Unemployment insurance is a critical lifeline for those without a job. Since the beginning of the recession and through the recovery, the extension of unemployment benefits is estimated to have helped 17 million workers and this year's extension will help another 4.3 million unemployed workers and an additional 8.1 million people living with them. But the extension of unemployment benefits and payroll tax cuts is not just the right thing to do for these families but also the smart thing to do. We know that for every dollar put in the pockets of the unemployed, about two dollars ripple through the economy, benefitting all of us. For the typical family, the payroll tax cut means an extra \$40 in every paycheck.

These two programs make a huge difference in helping families meet their daily responsibilities to feed and clothe their children, heat their homes, and pay for gas and transportation costs. The bipartisan extension legislation adopted several proposals that were included in the President's American Jobs Act, such as providing greater flexibility in the use of unemployment benefits to help the unemployed get back to work, funding reemployment services, and giving states the flexibility to use unemployment funds to help individuals establish their own businesses.

In addition, this Administration has also stood with auto workers and the communities whose economies depend on the industry. The resurgence of the American automobile industry is seen in the fact that we've added roughly 200,000 new auto-related jobs over the past two and a half years. I am proud that the Department's Office of Recovery for Auto Communities and Workers (ORACW) has played an important role in coordinating the Federal response to help automotive communities and workers whose lives have been disrupted.

### **Investing in a Competitive Workforce**

The President has laid out proposals for ushering in a new era of American manufacturing, with more good jobs created and more products stamped "Made in the USA." We are seeking new tools that help American small businesses compete and lower tax rates for companies that make products and create jobs in the United States. Our students and workers must receive critical skills training so our workforce is aligned with the increasingly technical needs of American manufacturers. For these reasons, we are forging new partnerships between community colleges, businesses and the public workforce system to train and place skilled workers in high-wage, high-growth jobs.

Community colleges understand the needs of local employers. The Administration's new \$8 billion Community College to Career Fund, which we would co-administer with our colleagues at the Department of Education, will better enable our community colleges to partner with industry and develop training programs for workers to enter high-growth and high-demand industries that meet the needs of local employers. The Fund will also allow federal agencies to partner with state and local governments to help businesses that want to invest in America train the local workforce that best meets their skill needs. We are helping employers match what's taught in the classroom with their needs in an office or on the factory floor. This program will also support entrepreneurship training for workers and entrepreneurs. Altogether, the Community College to Career Fund will train up to 2 million American workers by 2015.

When I last came before you, we had just announced the grant competition for the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) program. Last September, we awarded \$500 million to educational institutions that partnered with employers in every state. Last month, I was excited to visit Roane State Community College (RSCC) in Harriman, Tennessee, the recipient of a \$2.86 million TAACCCT grant. I am sure Congressman DesJarlais can attest to the good work they are doing there. With this funding, RSCC is launching the Advanced Materials Training and Education Center with the mission of helping workers get back on their feet through training, and building partnerships with a number of local industry and economic development partners. Roane State also has partnered with Oak Ridge National Laboratory in an effort to develop a low-cost, low-density carbon fiber that can replace heavier steel used in airplanes, autos, and boats. The workers enrolled at the Center are being trained for good-paying advanced manufacturing jobs that can ultimately help reduce our dependence on foreign oil.

RSCC was one of the many strong applications we received. Last month, I joined Vice President Biden and Dr. Jill Biden at Davidson County Community College in Thomasville, North Carolina, to announce a solicitation for \$500 million in TAACCCT grants for FY 2012. We plan to make available \$500 million in additional funding over each of the next two Fiscal Years. This program will help advance our national goals to have every American obtain at least one year of post-secondary education and have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020.

We need to further advance these new skills to match the new challenges of our 21st century economy. In his State of the Union address, President Obama drove home the point that it's unacceptable that American companies have millions of unfilled job openings at a time of high unemployment. We must do more to help job-seekers acquire the skills to land jobs that already are open. Right now, there are high-growth industries that cannot find skilled labor to fill open positions, and we need to train our workers immediately to fill them.

One way we are addressing this challenge is through our H-1B Technical Skills Training Grant Competition, which has awarded \$342 million in grants to 79 public-private partnerships serving 31 states and the District of Columbia over the last 9 months. These grants will provide American workers with education, training and job placement assistance in high-growth industries and occupations where employers are currently using the H-1B nonimmigrant visa program to hire temporary foreign workers to respond to workforce shortages. Industries served by this program include advanced manufacturing, energy, health care, and information technology.

I was happy to see Congress pass some key Administration priorities in legislation extending the payroll tax cut, providing businesses tax credits for hiring our veterans, extending unemployment insurance benefits for the long-term unemployed, providing incentives for states to run short-time compensation programs so employees can avoid being laid off, and authorizing the use of emergency unemployment insurance funds to help the long-term unemployed participate in self-employment assistance programs. Additionally, the President's FY 2013 budget proposes a \$12.5 billion Pathways Back to Work Fund to provide employment opportunities for low-income adults and youths and to make it easier for the long-term unemployed and low-income workers to remain connected to the workforce and gain new skills for long-term employment.

The Department is also actively supporting policies and initiatives that don't require congressional approval to ensure our economy continues on the path to full recovery. We continue to develop new partnerships with the public and private sector to leverage their combined expertise. One such collaboration is our Social Jobs Partnership with Facebook. We have teamed up with the social media site, the National Association of State Workforce Agencies, the DirectEmployers Association, and the National Association of Colleges and Employers to provide employment resources to a large group of job seekers who utilize social networking. This initiative is providing immediate, meaningful and ready-to-use information for job seekers and employers, and a modern platform to better connect them with career opportunities.

I also understand the impact high energy prices have on middle class families. This is why the President has made clear we need an all-of-the-above approach to energy policy, one that makes strategic investments in a clean energy future. The transition to a clean energy economy will reduce our dependence on foreign energy while also spawning a new industry of sustainable green jobs in the United States. The President presented a vision for a new era in American energy fueled by homegrown and alternative energy sources designed and produced by American workers.

In June of last year we awarded \$38 million through the Green Jobs Innovation Fund to help existing training programs leverage additional resources to build sustainable green career pathways. And through the Recovery Act, the Department invested nearly \$500 million in 189 green job training programs to help train workers for careers in solar, wind, biofuels, and other renewable energy sources available throughout the United States.

These grants are helping train workers for the jobs of tomorrow and retain employment today. Our Recovery Act green job training grants have served and are still serving nearly 83,000 workers. Over 51,000 have completed training and of these, 87% have received a credential, such as a certificate or degree. Despite tough economic times, almost 20,000 training completers have now entered new employment with 81% of them in green training-related jobs. It is important to note that of the 83,000 number, almost 39,000 were incumbent workers. We estimate that at least 90% of these workers who received green jobs training retained employment because of the skills upgrades they received, with the remaining workers finding new positions. These were smart investments that are preparing Americans for the clean energy jobs driving our 21<sup>st</sup> century economy, and it is important to remember that some of the programs will not be finished until 2013. These grants have already helped thousands of people and they continue to help more people every day. This is important because a report last year from the Brookings Institution, in collaboration with the Battelle Technology Partnership Practice, entitled *Sizing the Clean Economy: A National and Regional Green Jobs Assessment*, estimated that 2.7 million Americans are employed in positions related to the “clean economy.” And although much smaller in size than traditional industry sectors, green energy is growing rapidly: these sectors grew at a rate of 8.3% between 2003 and 2010—almost double the growth rate of the overall economy during that time.

I am particularly proud of our partnership, led by our Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, with job clubs and career ministries across the country. While we do not provide any funding to the job clubs, they are a valuable component of the workforce investment system. The personal connections within a congregation or community can help job seekers expand their professional networks and get other support critical to employability. This support includes emotional and even spiritual support through a process that – as anyone who has had to search for a job can attest – can often be isolating and emotionally draining. Employers that have worked with job clubs have successfully met their hiring needs by building trust with job club leaders and members.

Through these strategic partnerships, job clubs also offer a nice community complement to the workforce investment system to serve more job seekers in an efficient manner.

I recently visited one of the largest job clubs in the country, the McLean Bible Church Career Network Ministry in Vienna, Virginia. This group draws between 100 and 250 people every Tuesday evening. They have hundreds of success stories from the past two years, including Karen McCann, who showed up at her office one day in December 2010 to learn that her position was being terminated through no fault of her own. She was out of work for nearly nine months. During this time, she attended the ministry to learn how to become a better networker and how to more effectively market her skills and experience. The camaraderie of the group meetings helped her maintain a positive outlook during the job search process. As a result, she landed a new management position with a technology firm.

Chairman Kline, you may be interested to know that in your own Congressional District there are a handful of job clubs hosted by local churches that are providing invaluable support to job seekers – or as the clubs like to call them, people in transition. Last month, we hosted a Job Clubs Symposium at the Temple Israel Synagogue in Minneapolis. One of the panels featured Catherine Byers Breet, who leads the Easter Lutheran Church Job Transition Support Group in Eagan, a model group that is helping a range of individuals get back into the workforce, from dislocated professionals to returning veterans.

The Department also continues to use National Emergency Grants (NEG) to help those communities that have been hit hard by disasters or large layoffs. In 2011, the Department made available over \$265 million to 34 states and Puerto Rico. We all remember the devastating impact Hurricane Irene had on the East Coast and Puerto Rico. To help with the clean-up and recovery in these communities, we have made available over \$50 million in NEG funding to New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, and Vermont. I know that there are Members on this Committee whose districts were hit hard and you have my commitment that the Department will continue to work with those communities to provide all the assistance and support we can.

We also all remember the horrific images of the City of Joplin, Missouri after it was hit by a tornado in May of last year. The Department was one of the first agencies on the ground to help the affected families. To date, we have provided almost \$20 million in NEG funds to help dislocated workers and support clean-up and humanitarian efforts. Our Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) personnel were also on the ground to provide vital health and safety advice and guidance to responders. I am proud of the assistance the Department of Labor provided as part of the larger effort to help Joplin rebuild.

Also last year, communities in Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, and Tennessee felt the impact of storms that spawned several tornadoes. Once again, the Department used nearly \$30 million in NEG funds to help families in many of these states. Finally, I hope committee Members from Tennessee are aware of the support the Department is giving to

the workers and families affected by the closure of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company in Union City. DOL has made available nearly \$3.5 million in NEG funds to help nearly 850 job seekers to search for new employment.

### **Modernizing the Workforce System**

The Department believes we can provide a ladder to higher-paying careers for more Americans with the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). WIA reauthorization presents a unique opportunity to promote innovation in the public workforce system, build on its strengths, and address its challenges. Through the reauthorization process, the public workforce system can be positioned to help even more workers gain a foothold in the middle class by ensuring they have skills to succeed. It also can assist more American businesses by giving them the highly qualified human capital that will help them succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century global economy. WIA has helped many individuals find work during one of our country's most challenging economic times. During Program Year (PY) 2009 and PY 2010, 1.57 million WIA assisted adults and dislocated workers entered employment. In PY 2010, nearly 70% of individuals receiving training services became employed within one quarter after program completion and over 85% retained employment in both the second and third quarters after program completion.

In Congresswoman Foxx's home state of North Carolina, David Waugh experienced the power of WIA programs in helping unemployed workers get back on their feet. After many years in the construction industry, David suddenly found himself unemployed. But through the Jobs Now Program funded by WIA, David reinvented himself as a welder for a machinery manufacturer. He received career counseling and a scholarship through WIA-funded DavidsonWorks in Lexington to study welding and take math and computer courses. When he graduated, David entered an on-the-job training program where he sharpened his skills for his new career. He was subsequently offered a full-time welding job with a local machinery manufacturer and was promoted into a supervisory position with the company. David said the training he received through the program helped define his career path and gave him the skills necessary to succeed.

I remain committed to working with this Committee and Congress to support a bipartisan reauthorization proposal that includes the streamlining of service delivery, one-stop shopping for high quality services, engaging employers on a regional and sectoral level, strengthening accountability, and promoting innovation. The workforce proposals put forth by the President go hand in hand with these principles, and I share the commitment to building a public workforce system for the 21st century that is more efficient and responsive to the challenges of this economy and the labor market. Reforming the workforce system is an important goal, and the Administration seeks to work with the Congress to achieve this goal.

The Department supports establishing "one program, one website, and one place" for workers to receive employment support. We seek to streamline, reform and modernize the way our job training system helps laid off workers get training to transition to new

careers. In this increasingly global economy, it will be difficult to distinguish between trade, technology, outsourcing, consumer trends and other economic shifts that cause displacement. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, the FY 2013 budget proposes a universal core set of services to help all displaced workers, including workers who lost jobs in trade-impacted industries, find new jobs. Under the President's proposed Universal Displaced Worker program, up to a million workers a year would receive high-quality job-search assistance, together with access to critical skills training for high-growth and in-demand industries or, for older workers, the option of wage insurance – a significant improvement on the current system.

We also plan to launch a new website and a single phone number that can be used by job seekers and employers to link to all available employment and job training resources. The FY 2013 budget proposes to strengthen One-Stop Career Centers and increase public awareness and use of the public workforce system. This budget request reflects an anticipated uptick in the use of the public workforce system by Post-9/11 veterans returning home and seeking intensive services under the Department of Labor's "Gold Card" initiative, which is discussed in further detail below. For this reason, the President's proposal also calls for the creation of an American Job Center Network to unify all Federally-supported One-Stop Career Centers and electronic resources. We seek to expand access to workforce services by partnering with libraries and other entities to offer more convenient hours, and create better online tools that offer personalized services that reach the unemployed sooner and on a continuous basis. In addition, we propose to extend online and personalized services to better serve employers through our American Job Center Network.

We have also implemented a number of administrative reforms to ensure that the workforce system is able to meet the needs of job seekers and businesses during this economic recovery. These include increasing innovation in workforce service delivery; improving reemployment strategies; strengthening connections between unemployment insurance and the workforce system; promoting industry recognized credential attainment; and making labor market and credential information more accessible to job seekers and employers.

### **Supporting Our Youth**

Our role to support, train, and prepare workers doesn't stop with adults. Our national youth unemployment rate currently stands at 16.5 percent for youth ages 16 to 24. That number is better than the April 2010 peak of 19.6 percent, but it's still unacceptably high. Youth summer unemployment has almost doubled since before the recession. Last July, the youth unemployment rate stood at 17.4 percent compared with 10.5 percent in the summer (July) of 2007.

Minority youth have had an especially difficult time finding summer employment. Last July, the unemployment rate for African American youth was 31 percent and 20.1 percent for Latino youth. Job opportunities are not only important for the youth themselves; in



these tough economic times, many young people share their earnings with their families to help them make ends meet.

It is more important than ever that our youth have opportunities that prepare them for the future and that encourage their growth and enrichment. That is why we announced President Obama's Summer Jobs Plus initiative, a call to action for American businesses, nonprofits and government entities to put our young people to work this summer. I've heard from countless employers about the value they have found in hiring young summer workers. These opportunities create lasting personal connections that build loyalty and add value to a company. They help companies build a pipeline of highly qualified local talent – something critical to building strong communities.

In 2009 and 2010, the Recovery Act helped around 368,000 young people to find summer work opportunities. Unfortunately, we have not had additional funding to fully continue this effort. In 2011, I traveled to communities across the country and challenged employers to make a commitment to summer jobs. A number of major corporations, nonprofits, local governments and others signed on and together we opened up 80,000 summer job opportunities for America's youth.

We are building on this momentum in 2012. We have already secured commitments for more than 180,000 positions and our goal is to reach 250,000 work opportunities before the beginning of summer. To help meet that goal, we will soon be launching a Summer Jobs Plus Bank, a one-stop online search tool being built with help from Google, AfterCollege, LinkedIn, and Internships.com. These efforts will allow young people to access opportunities in their local communities.

Our Job Corps program does just that by helping prepare disadvantaged youth for a brighter future. For PY 2010, the last full time period for which we have complete data, 84% of graduates entered employment, the military or enrolled in post-secondary educational training. More than 20,000 students earned a high school diploma or GED and more than 33,000 completed their career technical training and received a Career Technical Training certificate. Since July 2010, Job Corps has opened three new centers in Pinellas, Florida, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Ottumwa, Iowa. These centers are already up and running and making a huge difference in the lives of our youth.

As you know, Job Corps also is focused on training and preparing our youth for the jobs of tomorrow. Our new green training programs have resulted in over 29,000 "green graduates" since PY 2009 in fields such as electronic health records, overhead linesman training, weatherization, solar, and smart grid technology. Job Corps also has developed an interim credentialing program with the Office of Apprenticeship designed to provide apprenticeship opportunities to graduates.

We have many Job Corps success stories, but I'd like to share one that may be of interest to Congressman Kildee. In March of last year, Nate Ford graduated from our Flint/Genesee Job Corps Center in Michigan, working through the center's carpentry training area. Through the Work-Based Learning program, Nate worked with a local

insulation company, Retrofoam, where he applied his training skills on a daily basis. After graduating from Job Corps, Nate got an internship through AmeriCorps as a youth construction supervisor with Habitat for Humanity. His responsibilities included teaching the youth volunteers about construction basics. He stayed in this position for about 3 months and because his work was exceptional, he was hired full time. He now interviews and instructs new members for different Habitat for Humanity projects.

Our 2013 Budget also proposes reforms to improve the Job Corps program. While most centers meet program standards, some centers have been persistently low-performing based on their educational and employment outcomes, and have remained in the bottom cohort of center performance rankings for many years. Especially in a constrained budget environment, and given the resource intensiveness of the Job Corps model, it is neither possible nor prudent to continue to invest in centers that have historically not served students well. The populations previously served by these Job Corps centers will be eligible to attend higher-performing centers. Job Corps will also make changes to its strategies and approaches based on the findings of program evaluations, strengthen the performance measurement system, and report center-level performance in a more transparent way.

I'd also like to briefly update you on our YouthBuild program. Since 2007, 22,950 participants have been enrolled into the YouthBuild program. Since this time, a total of 7,887 participants have been placed into employment and 12,530 have received an industry-recognized certificate, credential or high school diploma. We expect more positive news as more youth finish their service in the YouthBuild program. We are proud of the success of our youth programs in helping to turn around the lives of youth who face difficult barriers to employment.

### **Honoring Our Veterans**

We also are working hard to do the same for our nation's veterans. We ask so much of our military personnel. They often put their careers on hold, leave their loved ones behind and embark on dangerous missions across the world to protect our daily freedoms.

Our returning service members deserve a hero's welcome and a chance to utilize their unique skills to help rebuild our economy. By promoting priority of service for veterans in the One-Stop Career Center system, we ensure that veterans receive the training and employment assistance they need to obtain good jobs. Our homeless assistance programs help nearly 18,000 veterans in their efforts to reintegrate into the workforce. We provide transition assistance to 144,000 service members and spouses as they move from the military into civilian careers.

The Department of Labor has launched a number of new initiatives in the past year to assist veterans return to the civilian workforce. A new website called My Next Move for Veterans allows our veterans to enter their military occupation code and discover civilian jobs where their skills translate. They can browse more than 900 career options. We have also developed the veterans' "Gold Card," which gives Post-9/11 veterans increased

access to six months of intensive job counseling and personalized case management services at one of the approximately 3,000 One-Stop Career Center locations across the country. These services include career assessments, direct referrals to open jobs, interview coaching, resume assistance, and training referrals.

Many veterans have already downloaded the Gold Card since its creation last November, increasing the number and quality of services to veterans over and above the 1.8 million served through the workforce system in PY 2010. Additionally, our Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) has embarked on a number of partnerships to connect veterans with jobs and training. Our partners include the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs. We will continue to work with our partners at the federal level and in the private sector to increase employment opportunities for our brave service men and women and their families.

What makes me proud are stories like that of Navy Veteran Glen Williams of Illinois, who has a passion for helping his fellow veterans and especially those like himself, who have a disability. But when he found himself out of work, Glen turned to VETS for assistance. After researching the federal job hiring process and struggling to navigate it, he wrote an email to VETS and asked for assistance to better understand the process and his rights and benefits as a veteran.

VETS worked with Glen to refine his resume and showed him the general protocol on replying to job leads. He received a Linked-In message seeking someone who was familiar with the government, military and human resources recruiting companies, leading him to a position as a disability and military outreach community recruiter. He began the job last year and now works to connect veterans and individuals with disabilities to employment opportunities.

We also are strengthening our enforcement and affirmative action initiatives for veterans. We continue to educate about and enforce the provisions of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act and VETS has engaged in an aggressive public outreach campaign, aimed not only at our service men and women, but also at employers, attorneys, and human resources professionals as well. Since the passage of the Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 2008, which imposed a 90-day deadline for USERRA case investigations and a 60-day deadline for USERRA case referrals to DOJ or OSC, case processing times have diminished. We attribute this to increased scrutiny on investigative procedures, ensuring that case investigations are completed in a timely manner. VETS' USERRA Quarterly Reports to Congress measure VETS' compliance with the 90- and 60-day investigation and referral time limits, and reflect that VETS continues to meet its deadlines. Additionally, last summer we proposed updates to the Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act (VEVRAA) that would require federal contractors and subcontractors to conduct more substantive analyses of recruitment and placement actions taken under VEVRAA.

Through our Jobs for Veterans State Grants, last year DOL provided services to nearly 589,000 veterans and 201,000 veterans found jobs. The grants fund two types of

veterans' employment specialist positions in the states: (1) the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program specialist, who provide intensive services to those veterans most in need, and (2) Local Veterans' Employment Representatives, who provide outreach to employers and engage in advocacy efforts to increase employment opportunities for veterans.

An important program aimed at assisting veterans as they transition back into the workforce is the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), which provides Employment Workshops and direct services for separating service members, including members of the National Guard and Reserve. In FY 2011, over 144,000 transitioning service members and spouses attended a TAP employment workshop at one of 272 locations worldwide. VETS has taken steps to provide demobilizing members of the guard and reserve services in the event they are not located near any of the locations where TAP is normally provided. Moreover, our State Directors for Veterans' Employment and Training are part of the planning process when units in their area demobilize. Supporting veterans and their families is part of our larger effort at the Department of Labor to provide equal opportunity for all workers. We also are in the process of completely overhauling TAP for the first time in 19 years to help veterans translate their military experience into full-time civilian employment. The redesign is based on established best practices and will create solutions for a successful transition from military to civilian life. We are now in the midst of deploying the Workshop at pilot sites across the services so that we can refine and finalize this curriculum based on feedback and evaluation.

Progress has also been made in implementing Executive Order 13518, "Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government," signed by President Obama in November 2009. The Executive order created the Veterans Employment Initiative with the goal of helping Federal agencies identify qualified veterans, clarifying the hiring process for veterans seeking employment with the Federal government, and helping them adjust to the civilian work environment once they are hired. Veterans were 28.3 percent of total new hires in the Federal Government in FY 2011 based on preliminary data obtained by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, which is one of the Department's strategic partners in implementing the initiative. This increase is approximately 4.3 percentage points over the FY 2009 total of 24.0 percent and approximately 2.7 percentage points over the FY 2010 result of 25.6 percent.

### **Equal Opportunity for All Workers**

As we observe Women's History Month, it is important to note that the number of women in the military is growing rapidly. Women are now 20% of recruits, 14% of the current military population, and make up 18% of the National Guard and Reserves. But today, over 12 percent of our Post-9/11 female veterans are unemployed. We can and must do better. The Department of Labor is committed to making sure these women have better access to jobs and job training to help them transition back into the civilian workforce.

Too many women who once proudly wore our uniform now go to sleep in our streets, under our bridges and in vacant homes. The Department is addressing issues that lead to increasing rates of homelessness among women veterans, shedding light on the challenges of homelessness, and creating solutions that bring about positive change. That is why our Women's Bureau hosted a series of "Women-to-Women Stand Downs" around the country for female veterans. In local communities, service providers and businesses came together to provide homeless female veterans with a variety of free services that ranged from employment counseling, job training, housing vouchers, mental health screening, and child care. The Women's Bureau has also created a new online publication entitled "Trauma-Informed Care for Women Veterans Experiencing Homelessness: A Guide for Service Providers." The guide gives service providers – like social workers, mental health practitioners and community organizations – the tools to assess the specific traumas suffered by female veterans and make them conscious of their unique experiences and needs.

Women's History Month also reminds us that almost 50 years after passage of the Equal Pay Act, a stubborn wage gap continues to impact women and their families who rely upon their earnings. On average, women, who now comprise almost half of the workforce and work full-time, still earn only about 80 cents for every dollar a man earns. The gap is even larger for African American women who earn about 70 cents and Hispanic women who earn about 60 cents for each dollar that white males earn. Over a woman's lifetime, this wage gap adds up and grows over time. By age 65, the cumulative gap in earnings can be hundreds of thousands of dollars.

An America built to last is a nation where every man and woman is paid equally for equal work. And while we continue to struggle to achieve that fundamental promise, we are making steady progress in our pursuit. President Obama created the National Equal Pay Task Force, bringing together DOL and other Federal agencies to address this problem in a more coordinated way. Since the Task Force was founded in January 2010, through the end of 2011, DOL's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) has closed 41 compliance evaluations with financial settlements remedying compensation discrimination on the basis of gender and race, totaling \$1,547,427 in back pay and salary adjustments to 549 workers.

Multiple agencies within DOL are working hard to help women workers and eliminate the wage gap. We are increasing our enforcement against employers who discriminate, and leveling the playing field for those who follow the law. We have launched a competition to develop a pay equity software application that is intended to educate users about the gender pay gap so that women have the information they need to negotiate better with their employers and to help them identify cases of discrimination. OFCCP is also considering a proposal to collect compensation data with respect to gender, race and national origin from federal contractors and subcontractors. We can't solve the problem of pay inequity until we can see it, count it and put a dollar figure on it.

The Women's Bureau has also been instrumental in this regard. They are developing educational materials for both employers and working women, including information to

help employees identify potential wage discrimination and resources to assist employers in complying with all applicable equal pay laws. Recently, they also released a guide entitled "Why Green is Your Color: A Woman's Guide to a Sustainable Career," which is designed to help women find and keep higher paying jobs in the clean energy economy.

We are also working to create more opportunities for workplace flexibility so that workers have more options to help care for their families without being penalized. The labor force has changed significantly during the last few decades, including an increase in the number of working women. The demands of work and personal life, including family care-giving and personal health or education, require that employers adapt to the changing needs of its workers.

Policies that support the realities of work-life balance are critical to workers and to our economy as a whole. Promoting work-life balance, including flexible workplace policies, is one of the many ways the Department of Labor will improve working conditions and promote economic security for all working women.

As the economy begins to recover, we also must ensure it provides opportunities to all Americans who want to work – including people with disabilities. The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), which celebrated its 10 year anniversary in December, continues to develop and influence disability employment-related policies and practices. The Office helps individuals with disabilities get the tools they need to improve their employment outcomes and helps businesses find talented workers with disabilities.

To assist small businesses—including those in minority communities— access the talent of adults and youth with disabilities, ODEP continues its Add Us In initiative. Through this initiative, ODEP funds eight grantees across the nation to develop innovative models for small business to increase disability hiring. The Disability Employment Initiative (DEI), a joint initiative between ODEP and the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), supports the public workforce system in providing effective integrated employment services to people with disabilities. Funding for this program started in 2010 and last year we provided over \$21 million to seven states for the DEI.

Finally, ODEP continues to partner with the Department's Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) to help federal workers who are injured or become disabled on the job return to productive employment. Both agencies will continue to support the Protecting Our Workers and Ensuring Reemployment (POWER) Initiative by conducting research to document best practices that get folks back to work safely and as soon as is possible. These efforts on behalf of the disability community are critical – for workers and employers – and we are proud to be making them.

### **Protecting American Workers**

Equally important are the efforts we are making to protect American workers. We know that workers need protection more than ever during difficult economic times. It is in

these periods – when workers fear losing their jobs – that they may be more reluctant to complain about unsafe conditions.

Our worker safety and health agencies – the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) – are on the front lines protecting workers from workplace hazards. Since these agencies were created, we have made significant progress in protecting workers. It is estimated that in 1970 around 14,000 workers were killed on the job compared with more than 4,500 today. But 4,500 workplace deaths and over almost 4 million serious injuries are still far too high. There is still much work to be done.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Workers Killed</b>
1970	14,000
2012	4,500

Almost two years ago, the Upper Big Branch (UBB) disaster, the worst coal mining disaster in 40 years, claimed 29 lives and injured two miners. We pledged to do everything within our power to make sure such a tragedy would never happen again. This deadly explosion shook the foundation of mine safety and caused us all to take a deeper look at the weaknesses in the safety net expected to protect the nation’s miners. Our investigation found that this terrible incident was, in fact, preventable. It was the result of intentional and systematic efforts by Massey Energy to avoid compliance with MSHA safety and health standards and regulations. Those 29 miners did not have to die.

We know that the dangers of mining are well documented. But we also know that mining can be both safe and profitable, and the compliance records of many mine operators are a testament to this fact. However, too many mine operators still do not make safety their number one priority, and we need the tools to promptly address mines that disregard the law and put miners in harm’s way.

We recently completed our internal review of MSHA’s actions at the Upper Big Branch mine prior to the explosion. At the time of the accident, I personally committed to performing the most thorough review ever, and I believe that we did that. The internal review team made a number of recommendations, which we are committed to implementing, for improvements in MSHA’s enforcement policies and procedures, training programs, and regulations. Immediately after the tragic accident, Assistant Secretary Main had begun implementation of a number of program improvements at MSHA to make the most of the tools we already have to strengthen miner safety and health.

In April 2010, MSHA began conducting impact inspections across the country, focusing on mines with poor compliance histories or particular compliance concerns. To date, we have conducted more than 400 impact inspections, yielding over 7,000 citations, many for obvious violations of basic and necessary safety standards. As a result, some mine operators have worked to clean up their practices. Unfortunately, some mine operators still choose to blatantly disregard the law. Last December, for example, on an impact inspection at a mine in Kentucky, MSHA issued an imminent danger order when an

inspector observed a coal pile 5 feet high and 10 feet wide on fire, just feet away from an unsecured explosives storage magazine.

<b>MSHA Impact Inspections</b>	<b>Citations Issued</b>
400	7,000

Impact inspections alone are not enough to sufficiently address the worst offenders. A number of mine operators seem to believe that citations and the associated fines are simply part of the cost of doing business. In October 2010, MSHA began using new screening criteria for the pattern of violations program to more accurately identify mines with chronic and persistent health and safety violations. Those mines that chronically fail to maintain safe working conditions can be subject to additional sanctions through the pattern of violations process. MSHA has worked to make this process transparent and created an online tool that enables mine operators, miners, the media, and the public to see how a specific mine matches up with the criteria for a potential pattern of violations. To further enhance the use of its available tools, MSHA recently announced a reorganization that will allow it to better manage, support, and coordinate special enforcement actions.

MSHA recently began the third phase of its “Rules to Live By” initiative, using this opportunity to educate miners and mine operators about the most common causes of mining deaths. Some of these problems cannot be addressed without solving the backlog of cases before the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission. Together, the Commission, the Office of the Solicitor and MSHA have been working at reducing the backlog of contested violations. I appreciate the support Congress has shown for these efforts and we will continue to work tirelessly to not just address the current backlog, but to also prevent future backlogs of cases before the Commission.

MSHA’s work to protect our nation’s miners is a combination of inspections, enforcement, education and improved regulations. Recently, we finalized a rock dust rule that will help prevent coal mine dust explosions. This rule responds to one of the many lessons we have learned in the past two years.

Our efforts are beginning to have an impact. In 2011, we saw the second-lowest numbers of mining deaths since statistics were first recorded in 1911. This was accomplished while employment in the mining sector increased. Several of the larger coal producing states experienced zero mine fatalities in 2011. But 37 fatalities is still 37 too many.

I believe that more can be done to protect workers in our nation’s mines. They are the backbone of our economy. No worker should ever have to sacrifice their life for their livelihood. And no family should ever worry whether they will lose their loved one for a paycheck. In order for MSHA personnel to effectively protect miners and prevent another tragedy like Upper Big Branch, we need to be able to deal with the small percentage of mine operators that believe miner injuries, illnesses, and deaths are just part of the cost of doing business. They absorb the “cost” of fines and temporary work stoppages and risk their workers’ lives. Thus, I urge you to pass legislation that would



provide MSHA with stronger enforcement tools to ensure mine operators meet their responsibility to protect their workers.

We all agree that good jobs should also be safe jobs. OSHA works hard to ensure employers have the knowledge and tools to live up to their responsibility to ensure safe workplaces for their employees. We have seen the results of our hard work. In FY 2011, OSHA set a goal of removing 475,000 workers from hazards – and exceeded it by 20 percent, actually removing over 625,000 workers from hazards through inspections.

However, OSHA only has the ability to reach a small number of workplaces each year. Therefore, the best way to promote safe and healthy workplaces is to ensure that workers can raise concerns to their employers—or to OSHA—about unsafe working conditions without fear of reprisal.

In addition to protecting worker’s health and safety rights, the agency has also been given responsibility to administer 20 other whistleblower laws that protect employees. For that reason, over the past year, we have made the improvement in our whistleblower program a top priority.

Responding to recommendations from the Government Accountability Office, DOL’s Inspector General and OSHA’s own internal study, we have improved training for the investigators, restructured the office to raise its priority within the agency, implemented pilot projects to increase consistency and improve customer service, improved the investigation tracking system, and published a Whistleblower Investigations Manual that provides further guidance and helps ensure consistency and high-quality investigations. The agency has recently hired 25 new investigators and will be further increasing the staff as a result of the increase the program received in the FY 2012 budget.

It is also our duty to help both workers and employers know their rights and responsibilities. We are continuing our active compliance assistance program so that all workers understand the hazards they face and their rights under the law. We are providing that same kind of compliance assistance and education to employers, ensuring they have access to important information and that they understand how to comply with the law.

Additionally, even amidst tough economic times, we are protecting increased levels of funding for our free small business consultation program. This program provides funding to every state so that small employers can call for a free onsite consultation visit without risk of receiving citations. This program provided services to almost 28,000 small businesses during FY 2011, removing over 3.6 million workers from hazards.

<b>Businesses Receiving Services from Small Business Consultation Program</b>	<b>Workers Removed from Hazards</b>
28,000	3.6 Million

Another way OSHA is promoting the culture of safety is by reaching out directly to vulnerable workers. Last year, together with partners around the country, we launched a

campaign to educate workers and their employers about the hazards of working outdoors in the heat, spreading the simple message of “water, rest, and shade” in both English and Spanish.

We also know that OSHA inspectors save lives directly. Last year, OSHA's Rick Burns was performing a worksite inspection on a deep, unprotected trench in Mercerville, Ohio, when he detected conditions that indicated collapse was imminent. He directed a worker to exit the trench, less than five minutes before the trench collapsed, burying the area where the worker had been with six to seven feet of soil. "The actions of the compliance officer likely saved this worker's life," said David Wilson, assistant area director in the Columbus area office.

OSHA has continued the process of streamlining and simplifying regulations in order to reduce the burden on employers. Under the Standards Improvement Project, OSHA reviews and eliminates outdated and duplicative regulations. The latest rule issued under this project saves employers \$43 million annually and eliminates almost 2 million annual hours of paperwork burdens. In addition, the modifications to OSHA's current Hazard Communication rule that will allow it to harmonize with the global system of labeling chemicals will be published soon.

We understand that most employers want to do the right thing and make their workplaces safe. But there are still some who insist on taking shortcuts when it comes to safety. Americans were reminded of that in January 2011 when OSHA cited two companies for the suffocation deaths of three workers in a grain silo. Two of these workers were teenagers – just 14 and 19 years old. These deaths could have been prevented if the employer had followed the law. The American people cannot tolerate such disregard for the lives and health of our citizens. We will continue to aggressively enforce our safety and health laws against those employers who choose shortcuts and profits over people. And we will continue to work with the employers who play by the rules and run safe workplaces. As we continue to advance our progress on the issue of worker protection, we remain committed to securing the incomes and benefits for all workers.

### **Securing Americans' Incomes and Benefits**

The Department of Labor's Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA) is continuing this important work to protect the security of retirement and health benefits for America's workers, retirees, and their families through a combination of compliance assistance, regulations, and enforcement.

Recently, EBSA finalized a rule improving the transparency of 401(k) fees to ensure that workers' hard-earned savings are not unwittingly being eroded by undisclosed fees. For the first time, workers will be provided with a simple and comprehensible schedule of what fees apply to what retirement investment options in a way that allows for an easy apples-to-apples comparison. A related effort enhances disclosures to fiduciaries responsible for sponsoring and operating retirement plans about the fees they pay to plan service providers. This will be especially useful to small businesses as they review their

401(k) plans in helping them understand the relative costs of the investment choices they offer their employees.

The agency is also working to enhance the protections that apply when participants and beneficiaries, business owners, and retirement savers in pension plans and IRAs receive advice regarding their retirement investments. Today, more and more individuals are responsible for making their own decisions about how to invest for retirement. As a result, a growing number of individual brokers and businesses are offering financial services, including advice as to what retirement products and services to choose and where retirement assets should be invested.

The financial professionals who offer advice for a fee should be required to place the interests of those they are advising first and avoid conflicts of interest. That’s exactly what the law currently provides. However, there are regulatory loopholes that advisers can use to avoid accountability. This is what EBSA’s effort to update its fiduciary definition is all about – making sure that those who provide investment advice on retirement savings do so in a way that is unbiased and free from conflicts of interest.

In addition to these critical initiatives, EBSA has had tremendous success in protecting employee benefits through both civil and criminal enforcement actions. EBSA’s enforcement and participant assistance efforts achieved total monetary results in FY 2011 of more than \$1.3 billion, and EBSA closed 302 criminal investigations. Additionally, EBSA’s criminal investigations, as well as its participation in criminal investigations with other law enforcement agencies, led to the indictment of more than 100 people.

<b>Civil Monetary Results FY 2011</b>	<b>Criminal Investigations Closed</b>	<b>Indictments</b>
\$1.38 billion	302	100

In 2011, our Benefits Advisors, who provide assistance, and education and outreach for workers, retirees, and their employers, closed more than 230,000 inquiries, helping informally resolve the complaints of 173,164 individuals and recovering over \$478 million through informal dispute resolution. We also conducted 1,831 outreach activities reaching more than 155,000 individuals.

<b>Inquiries Closed</b>	230,000
<b>Complaints Resolved</b>	173,164
<b>Money Recovered Through Informal Dispute Resolution</b>	\$478 Million
<b>Outreach Activities Conducted</b>	1,831
<b>Individuals Reached</b>	155,000

Recently in New York, a middle-aged woman with breast cancer had her health claims denied because of mistakes made by her husband’s former employer and its insurance company. Michelle Khalife, a benefits advisor with EBSA, discovered that the husband routinely had paid for extended health coverage under COBRA. However, the employer’s insurer had failed to activate his coverage on time, causing his ill wife to fall under a pre-existing condition exclusion. As the bills mounted, the family approached Khalife for help. Khalife gathered all of the parties in one meeting to hammer out the

details, resulting in reinstatement of the woman’s coverage, and the insurance company paying the family \$42,000 in medical bills.

It can be easy to forget, but in the midst of tough economic times, merely having a job is not always enough. Workers need good jobs that pay fair wages, keep them safe, and provide basic benefits.

The work of the Wage and Hour Division (WHD) is critical to achieving this goal. These investigators are committed not only to informing workers of their rights, but also to informing employers of their responsibilities in the workplace. Detecting and remedying labor violations protects law-abiding employers from unfair competition against those who flout the law and cut corners by paying workers less than they are owed. This commitment on behalf of my staff is important to the success of workers, and the businesses that employ them.

WHD has made great strides in ensuring that workers are respected and that their rights are protected. The Division has also worked to ensure that employers who break the law do not keep an unfair advantage over the vast majority of employers who do play by the rules. Under my leadership the Wage and Hour Division has secured impressive amounts of back wages for workers across the country. This is important, especially as our economy continues to recover.

In FY 2011, Wage and Hour investigators collected more than \$220 million in back wages for American workers—the largest amount collected in a single fiscal year in the Division’s history. These back wages were collected on behalf of more than 275,000 workers, including nearly 90,000 who had not been paid the minimum wage for all of the hours they had worked. This unprecedented back pay represents the rightful return of hard earned wages to the pockets of America’s workers. Further, it means more direct spending on goods and services, stimulating our economy and helping to create new jobs.

<b>Back Wages Collected in FY 2011</b>	\$220 Million
<b>Number of Workers Impacted</b>	275,000

Much of this impact is felt at the local level. When an employer in your district violates the Fair Labor Standards Act by not paying the required minimum wage or overtime, that employer is taking money out of the pockets of your constituents. Consider that WHD was able to recoup over \$45 million in back wages for over 40,000 workers in the state of New York since 2009. In North Carolina, WHD’s work on over 2,600 cases resulted in nearly 23,000 workers receiving \$18 million in back wages. And, under this Administration’s tenure, WHD has recouped nearly \$600 million in back wages in over 85,000 cases—impacting more than 720,000 workers nationwide.

<b>Total Back Wages Collected 2009-2012</b>	\$600 Million
<b>Total Number of Workers Impacted</b>	720,000

I want to make it clear that our work is about more than just the numbers. It is driven by a passion for the people we seek to help every single day. Because much our focus is on

low wage and vulnerable workers, the amount we collect per individual may seem small, but it can—and does—make all the difference for that worker and his or her family.

For example, a cable installer in Minnesota had been paid less than minimum wage by his employer. This worker was facing foreclosure of his home, but one of our investigations resulted in him receiving \$3,000 in back wages, allowing him to pay his mortgage and keep his home. And after an investigation in South Dakota recouped \$5,500 for a construction worker, he and his wife were able to buy back the wedding rings they had pawned in order to pay rent and avoid eviction.

Beyond the agency's enforcement efforts, WHD has undertaken a number of important initiatives and rulemakings to protect workers and employers. We have proposed a rule that would expand military family leave provisions under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and incorporate a special eligibility provision that would ensure the eligibility of flight crew employees. All interested parties are invited to review and submit written comments on the proposed rule. We also have a proposed rule under Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) that would extend minimum wage and overtime protections to many of the nearly two million in-home caregivers across America — protections that are currently denied.

Protecting youth on the job and enforcement of our child labor laws has always been a top priority of mine. After issuing a Final Rule in 2010 designed to protect youth employed in nonagricultural occupations, the WHD began work on updating and revising the safety requirements for young workers employed in agriculture.

The Department has engaged federal and state agencies in an effort to end the practice of misclassifying employees as independent contractors. Improperly classifying workers deprives those employees of many of the rights and benefits they are legally entitled to, including the minimum wage and overtime and makes it difficult for law-abiding employers to compete. We have signed Memorandums of Understanding with the Internal Revenue Service that will allow us to share information with them about our enforcement efforts, and also with thirteen state labor agencies, from Minnesota to Massachusetts and California to Hawaii, that will allow us to share information and coordinate misclassification enforcement. All of these efforts will help the Department of Labor protect workers and level the playing field for the vast majority of responsible employers who are playing by the rules.

### **Increasing Effectiveness and Accountability**

To create an economy that is built to last, we have to do more to live within our means and restore fiscal accountability and responsibility. This means increasing the effectiveness of our current programs and investing in innovation for the future. We are building evaluation into everything we do, which helps ensure accountability and efficiency. We have performance measures for every agency, which were in many cases non-existent prior to my arrival. This tracking allows us to know how each agency is performing against its goals and what we can do to best allocate our resources.

We continue to invest in the Department's Chief Evaluation Office, which is working to implement, manage and coordinate the Department's evaluations. This investment provides the Department with valuable intelligence about strategies and approaches that work for the benefit of all America's workforce. Through this effort, we are supporting the Administration's goal of building a transparent, high-performance government.

Our Chief Evaluation Office is working jointly with our Chief Economist's Office to create a centralized website on the evidence-based best practices. Many evaluations exist that inform us about which programs work, but the information is dispersed and does not always reach policy makers and practitioners. Readily available information will allow us all to make better-informed decisions.

Thanks to Congress's support, we have made available approximately \$98.5 million through the Workforce Innovation Fund to invest in projects that demonstrate and evaluate innovative workforce investment strategies, particularly to serve vulnerable populations. We look forward to a new Workforce Innovation Fund competition in FY 2013. The mission of the public workforce system is to find good jobs for everyone. These grants will significantly enhance the capacity of our public workforce system by identifying, evaluating and expanding successful programs. In addition to providing technical assistance to grantees throughout the life of the grants, the Department will share program evaluation results and best practices with both grantees and stakeholders in workforce, education, and human services systems.

We are also well underway into an evaluation of the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. Previous, non-experimental studies show that reemployment services and training provided through WIA increases employment and earnings after participation in this program, especially for adults. However, this random assignment evaluation will help us ascertain the impact and cost-effectiveness of WIA programs for the individuals we serve. The evaluation is beginning enrollment of participants at selected sites and we expect final results in 2017 with an interim report in 2016. Ultimately, this information will help us minimize duplication and maximize efficiency. I know these are goals upon which we can all agree and I sincerely hope we can work together to make improvements where they are needed.

## **Conclusion**

We are on the right track and we believe the programs and policies of the Department of Labor are making a difference for American families. The economy is improving and we are seeing broad employment gains. But we cannot stop now. We must continue to innovate and build upon what we know works, because we will not be satisfied until every American who wants work can find a job. Creating an economy built to last requires good jobs that pay well, fair and safe workplaces for our workers, a level playing field for businesses, and help for American workers to provide for their families and keep the pay and benefits they earn.

The President has put forward proposals that invest in our country and will help prepare Americans with the skills they need today, for the jobs of tomorrow. Together, we can accomplish our goals for our country by moving forward on these common sense measures that ensure good jobs for American workers. We will not always agree on how we get there, but we cannot delay action on important initiatives that will keep our economy growing and our nation moving in the right direction.

Thank you again for inviting me today. I am happy to respond to any questions that you may have.