

america's dynamic workforce

secretary's message



Introduction to *America's Dynamic Workforce*

by U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao

America's workers are the most dynamic and productive in the world. They are the backbone of the American economy, which is constantly evolving and producing new jobs and new opportunities. That's a tribute to the strength of our economy, the resiliency of our workforce, and an example of why the United States continues to be the envy of the world.

With this dynamism comes challenges. President George W. Bush and his Administration recognize that some industries are in transition and that workers must upgrade their skills or find new jobs to keep pace. That's why the President has asked Congress for \$23 billion to fund 34 different training and employment programs throughout the federal government. That is in addition to the generous, sophisticated and comprehensive safety net in place for transitioning workers. It includes income support, career counseling,

placement services and help with expenses including childcare and health care.

The President also recognizes that one of the critical challenges facing our nation today is ensuring that our workers are equipped with the right skills for the 21st Century economy. As the economy strengthens, new jobs are being created. But many of these require upgraded skills or some form of higher education. That doesn't necessarily mean a four-year degree. It can mean skills learned on the job or professional certification pursued through community colleges and apprenticeship programs in the skilled trades.

To respond to this urgent national need, the President announced several key initiatives:

- A Jobs for the 21st Century Initiative, which will expand the capacity of community colleges and other institutions to provide job training.
- A High-Growth Job Training Initiative, which tracks industries experiencing growth and helps workers access these new opportunities.
- The Skills to Build America program, designed to educate young people and workers about the great opportunities available in the skilled trades, which are needed for America's rapidly growing construction industry.

- An overhaul of the publicly funded job training program, so that more workers are trained with skills in demand in their communities.
- Comp Time and Flex Time initiatives, to provide private sector working parents, single mothers and other caregivers with the same options that federal government employees have to balance work and family needs.
- Building on No Child Left Behind educational reform, and improving high school education to ensure that our workers have the strong foundation needed to succeed in an increasingly knowledge-based economy.

I'm proud of the role that the U.S. Department of Labor plays in fulfilling the President's vision for a 21st Century workforce that is second to none. And I hope this book, which includes a snapshot of the major indicators of our economy and workforce, highlights why American workers continue to be the safest, most secure and most productive in the world.