



NASWA Bulletin - February 27, 2015

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NASWA Hosts 2015 Winter Policy Forum in Washington, D.C.

Last week, February 19-20, NASWA hosted its annual Winter Policy Forum in Washington, D.C., with over 160 attendees from 43 states and the District of Columbia. NASWA's Winter Policy Forum serves as the premier event for state workforce agency administrators, and other

workforce agency professionals, to discuss current economic conditions with national experts and learn about the Congressional outlook on a variety of workforce system issues.

Ellen Golombek, NASWA President and Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment opened the conference and highlighted that panel discussions would focus on converting from the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the role of workforce system leaders and their new partners.

John Colbert of Capitol Hill Partners addressed the attendees and provided an update on the new 114th Congress and shared insight into the federal budget situation and outlook for the workforce system.

NASWA was honored that Christopher Lu, Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL), addressed the Winter Policy Forum. Deputy Secretary Lu explained how the vision incorporated in President Obama's 2016 Federal Budget Proposal affects workforce policy and emphasized how important WIOA will be in transforming the workforce system.

Participants also heard from USDOL's Chief Economist, Dr. Heidi Shierholz, who shared her insights and perspectives on the status and outlook of the national economy and specifically, the labor market. (Her presentation can be accessed [here](#).)

Other highlights included the following:

- A panel consisting of federal agency WIOA partners discussed implementation and emphasized the importance of inter-agency communication and cooperation. Panel members included:
- Gerri Fiala; Deputy Assistant Secretary, [Employment and Training Administration, USDOL](#)
- Mark Greenberg; Acting Assistant Secretary, [Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)
- Janet LaBreck; Commissioner, [Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, U.S. Department of Education](#)
- Mark Mitsui; Deputy Director/Deputy Assistant Secretary, [Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education](#)

Another panel of experts from state workforce agencies and business associations discussed the importance of a "demand driven" workforce system where the needs of business and workers drive workforce solutions. Panel members included:

- Aaron Fichtner; Deputy Commissioner, [New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development](#)
- Jennifer McNelly; President, [Manufacturing Institute](#), Affiliate of National Association of Manufacturers
- Stephanie Steffens; Director, [Colorado Workforce Development Council](#)
- Jason Tyszko; Senior Director of Policy and Programs, [U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation](#)

Thursday's session concluded with a panel of partners from several state workforce agencies who discussed the opportunities to build new, and strengthen existing partnerships, especially in the areas of Adult Education and Vocational Rehabilitation. Panel members included:

- Andrea Guest; Director, [Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Delaware Department of Labor](#)
- Dan Holton; Assistant Administrator, Workforce Services Division, [Tennessee Department of Labor & Workforce Development](#)
- Stacey Laing; Employment and Training Administrator, [Delaware Department of Labor](#)
- Stephen Marshall; Business Services Specialist, [South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department](#)
- Pat Sherlock; Director, Policies and Procedures, [South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce](#)
- Trina Travis; Benefits Administrator, Workforce Programs, [Florida Department of Economic Opportunity](#)

On Friday, a group of panelists discussed strategies for addressing long-term unemployment and disconnected youth when implementing to WIOA. They have established statewide promising practices in these areas. Panel members included:

- John Martinez, Deputy Director of Program Development, Development and External Affairs, [MDRC](#)
- NASWA Treasurer Renee Olson, Division Administrator of the [Nevada Department of Employment Training and Rehabilitation](#)
- Dale Peinecke, Commissioner, [Washington Employment Security Department](#)
- John Martinez's presentation can be accessed [here](#)
- Renee Olson's presentation can be accessed [here](#)
- Dale Peinecke's presentation can be accessed [here](#)

The final panel shared with attendees how Arizona is facilitating the transition from WIA to WIOA through the establishment of a statewide WIOA Team that includes a number of state-wide departments and organizations within Arizona and the creation of eight task forces to review the

provisions in WIOA and explore the impact on existing programs. Panel members included:

- Jim Apperson, Assistant Director, Division of Employment & Rehabilitation Services, [Arizona Department of Economic Security](#)
- Joel Millman, Administrator, Employment Administration, [Arizona Department of Economic Security](#)
- Jim Apperson's and Joel Millman's presentation can be accessed [here](#).

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New Federal Developments On WIOA Implementation

The U.S. Departments of Labor, Education, and Health and Human Services recently issued their vision and initial implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The vision, outlined in [TEGL 19-14](#), encourages workforce system leaders and partners to take action now to support successful implementation of WIOA, as well as provides an overview of upcoming guidance and technical assistance to support effective implementation of the Act.

Late Friday, USDOL published a new set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on their website. The Q&As can be found at: http://www.doleta.gov/wioa/pdf/WIOA_FAQs_Round2.pdf

To further explain this vision, a webinar has been scheduled for Wednesday, March 4, 2015, at 1 pm, ET, which will include **Portia Wu**, Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration; **Johan Uvin**, Acting Assistant Secretary, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education; **Janet LeBreck**, Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration, U.S. Department of Education; and **Mark Greenberg**, Acting Assistant Secretary, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. To register for the webinar, go to: <https://www.workforce3one.org/view/5001504043347854447/info>

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NASWA Legislative Update Available

Click [here](#) for NASWA's Legislative Update summarizing key workforce issues for the 114th Congress. The easy-to-read document provides a quick update on a number of federal issues including: Fiscal Year 2015 appropriations for workforce programs and an overview of the Administration's proposed Fiscal Year 2016 budget. Other issues include implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; Restoration of the Governors 15 percent Reserve; Trade Adjustment Assistance; Additional funding for Reemployment Activities; Outlook on sequestration for Fiscal Year 2016; Work Opportunity Tax Credit and Unemployment Insurance

Administrative Funding.

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White House Releases Economic Report

The White House last week released its [2015 Economic Report](#) prepared by the Council of Economic Advisers. Chapter One of the report highlights wage stagnation that has affected middle-class households and proposes reforms to curtail rising income inequality and falling labor force participation. Chapter Two provides an overview of the U.S. economy's recent performance, and includes a section on state and local government spending.

The report notes that state and local governments negatively contributed to real GDP growth during the aftermath of the Great Recession from 2010-2012, but began making a positive contribution again in 2013 and 2014. However, during those two years, states and local governments only contributed 0.13 percentage point to the annual rate of real GDP growth. Meanwhile, state and local governments added just 100,000 jobs since January 2013, with employment in this sector at 631,000 below its previous high. The report also includes chapters on labor market trends, workplace flexibility – including a section on state and local initiatives to expand access to work-family friendly policies, options and potential benefits of business tax reform, an overview of the energy revolution and its implications for the economy and environment, and international trade.

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USDOL Evaluation Office Report Analyzes Services to Veteran Job Seekers

USDOL's Chief Evaluation Office has released a [report](#) that contrasts the experiences of Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) veterans, non-JVSG veterans, and non-veterans who participated in federally-funded employment services. These services are provided by Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVERs). The report examines employment rates, earnings, duration in employment services, and how quickly customers receive staff-assisted services. Comparisons were also made across gender, age, and military separation status.

According to USDOL, it is the first study of its kind to compare veterans who qualify for JVSG services to non-veterans and veterans served by other workforce system programs. It analyzes data from over 28 million customers, including two million veterans, collected over more than two years, while controlling for demographic differences among these populations. After these JVSG-served veterans exit the program, they have the highest entered employment rates, the highest employment retention rates, and the highest average earnings. It also found that JVSG

veterans experience smaller gender wage gaps.

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Youth Employment White Paper

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation has released a white paper, *Making Youth Employment Work: Essential Elements to a Successful Strategy*, that examines youth employment through the lens of the business community and argues that youth hiring practices are not just "good to do," but also serve a valuable business function. The paper notes five competitive advantages of employing young adults, outlines approaches to implementation, and identifies common barriers to success and the essential elements necessary to mitigate those challenges. The report also offers an employer checklist and case studies of companies who have been successful in their efforts. In addition to the paper, U.S. Chamber of Commerce President & CEO Thomas J. Donohue authored an [op-ed](#) noting that youth employment is a challenge our country cannot afford to ignore.

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Congressional Committee and Subcommittee Rosters Finalized for the 114th Congress

Although the 114th Congress convened in early January, the complete rosters for committees and subcommittees were not finalized until recently. The following are links to rosters for the committees most relevant to NASWA and workforce policy in general: [The Senate Committee on Appropriations](#) and [Senate Appropriations Subcommittees](#); [The Senate Committee on Finance](#) and [Senate Finance Subcommittees](#); [The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions \(HELP\)](#) and [Senate HELP Subcommittees](#); [The House Committee on Appropriations](#) and [House Appropriations Subcommittees](#); [The House Committee on Ways and Means](#) and [Subcommittees](#); and [The House Committee on Education and the Workforce](#) and [Subcommittees](#)

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2015 State Legislative Calendar

The map in the PDF version provides information when the legislative sessions in each state and the District of Columbia will end. Almost all the states will conclude their work by the beginning of July; with eleven states finishing in April; nine states concluding in May and thirteen states wrapping up in June. All state legislatures are currently in session with the exception of Louisiana, Alabama and Florida. Both Alabama and Florida convene March 3 and Louisiana will convene on April 13. NASWA will be working with the National Conference of State Legislatures to review

state legislation and identify areas that may conflict with WIOA to develop plans and strategies that resolve these conflicts.

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NASWA Policy Director Yvette Chocolaad Speaks at National Press Club Roundtable

NASWA Policy Director Yvette Chocolaad spoke at a roundtable on [Unemployment Insurance \(UI\) Benefits, Financing, and Reemployment Services after the Great Recession](#) at the [National Press Club](#) on January 28th. The roundtable was part of the National Academy of Social Insurance's annual policy research conference. While the research conference focused on the Medicare and Medicaid programs, pre-conference roundtable sessions were held on several other social insurance topics, including UI.

The roundtable examined the UI program during and just after the Great Recession. During her presentation, Ms. Chocolaad emphasized the UI program effectively delivered huge increases in benefit payouts through state and federal benefits, but was less prepared, despite some state and several temporary federal funding initiatives, to assess claimant work search efforts and engage UI claimants in job search activities—which should be important components of a UI system focused on reemployment.

She also discussed the administrative and other challenges states faced as they implemented complicated UI legislation during the Recession, and noted ongoing challenges related to outmoded UI information technology systems and insufficient administrative funding. These challenges were documented by a NASWA-led research team through two rounds of site visits to twenty states. Other roundtable presenters included Randall Eberts (Upjohn Institute), Wayne Vroman (Urban Institute), Christopher O'Leary (Upjohn Institute), and George Wentworth (National Employment Law Project).

Her presentation was based on the Unemployment Insurance chapter of the 2013 book, *The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act: The Role of Workforce Programs*. She, Wayne Vroman, and Richard Hobbie (former NASWA Executive Director and Visiting Scholar, Heldrich Center) authored the chapter. The book project was overseen by NASWA and funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, and involved a team of highly regarded researchers from around the country.

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Education Department Releases Report on Transforming Adult Learning

The Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE) at the U.S. Department of Education released the report, *Making Skills Everyone's Business: A Call to Transform Adult Learning in the United States*. The report offers suggestions for how to establish convenient, effective, high-quality learning opportunities for low-skilled youth and adults. Specifically, the report offers seven strategies for improving the conditions that create and perpetuate poor literacy, numeracy, and problem solving. The seven strategies include:

1. Act Collectively to Raise Awareness and Take Joint Ownership of Solutions
2. Transform Opportunities for Youth and Adults to Assess, Improve, and Use Foundation Skills
3. Make Career Pathways Available and Accessible in Every Community
4. Ensure That All Students Have Access to Highly Effective Teachers, Leaders, and Programs
5. Create a “No Wrong Door” Approach for Youth and Adult Services
6. Engage Employers to Support Upskilling More Front-Line Workers
7. Commit to Closing the Equity Gap for Vulnerable Subpopulations

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State Workforce Agency Input Needed to Help Identify Employment and Training Research Gaps and Priorities

The John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development has launched a survey on behalf of the U.S. Department of Labor to seek input from state workforce agencies and other stakeholders to identify gaps in employment and training research and to identify priority research needs. The survey can be accessed [here](#) or through the Heldrich Center's [website](#). The survey will close at the end of March.

The Heldrich Center survey is part of a larger effort by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration to develop a five-year strategic plan for research and evaluation. In approaching NASWA about the survey, the Heldrich Center emphasized that “given the tremendous challenges facing the workforce development system, it is essential federal, state, and local policymakers and practitioners have access to timely and credible research about the programs and practices that are most effective and efficient in helping American workers prepare for and obtain employment.”

The Heldrich Center is also managing a USDOL ETA National Expert Advisory Panel that will provide input on the strategic plan, and NASWA was invited to participate on the panel. Members of the Panel include:

- Amanda Cage, Chicago Workforce Board
- Rachael Zinn, National Skills Coalition
- Burt Barnow, George Washington University
- Chris King, Ray Marshall Center, University of Texas at Austin
- Daniel Marschall, AFL-CIO
- David Berman, NYC Center for Economic Opportunity
- Edwin Melendez, Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College
- Harry Holzer, Public Policy Institute, Georgetown University
- Jim Jacobs, Macomb Community College
- Martin Simon, Center for Best Practices, National Governors Association
- Dane Linn, Business Roundtable
- Neil Ridley, Center on Education and the Workforce, Georgetown University
- Yvette Chocolaad, National Association of State Workforce Agencies
- Randall W. Ebert, W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research
- Richard Hendra, MDRC
- Robert I. Lerman, Urban Institute
- Sara Rix, AARP
- Whitney Smith, Joyce Foundation
- Ricardo Estrada, Instituto Del Progreso Latino
- Susanne Bruyere, Cornell University, ILR School, Employment and Disability Institute
- Michael Stoll, Center for the Study of Urban Poverty, UCLA

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Unemployment Insurance Initial Claims Increase and Continued Claims Decrease

The U.S. Department of Labor reported for the week ending February 21, 2015, seasonally adjusted unemployment insurance initial claims increased from the previous week's revised figure.

Seasonally adjusted initial claims increased by 31,000 to 313,000 from last week's revised figure of 282,000. The 4-week moving average was 294,500, an increase of 11,500 from the previous week's revised average of 283,000. The unadjusted initial claims level totaled 280,000 up 2,096 from the previous week, and down 32,665 from the level of 312,665 for a comparable week in 2014.

UI continued claims, seasonally adjusted, for the week ending February 14, 2015, were 2,401,000 down 21,000 from the previous week's revised figure. The 4-week moving average increased 1,750 to 2,399,000 from the prior week's revised figure of 2,397,250.

The total number of individuals claiming benefits in all programs for the week ending February 7, 2015, was 2,866,747, an increase of 12,469 from the prior week. Regular state continued claims increased by 14,536, and EB decreased by 16. During the week of February 7, 2015, continued claims for ex-federal employees stood at 17,177 up 67 from the prior week, and for newly discharged veterans, 23,787 up 160 from the prior week.

Initial claims continue to exhibit some relatively moderate week to week fluctuations, largely caused by the difficulty of seasonally adjusting a weekly series. In the graph below the relative decline year to year in the non-adjusted weekly series is evident.

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SIDES Team Holds Implementation Training Session in Denver, CO

The National State Information Data Exchange System (SIDES) Team held a two-day implementation training session in Denver, Colorado, February 3-4, 2015. Although the training was primarily for Alaska and Connecticut, who recently received funding for SIDES from US Department of Labor (USDOL) through Supplemental Budget Requests (SBRs), registration was open to all participating states. The training session was well attended, with fifty three participants from twenty states and five employers/Third Party Administrators (TPAs).

During the two-day training session, participants were briefed on the technical and business aspects of SIDES, as well as the details of implementing SIDES from the planning, development, implementation, and production phases. The participants were also provided best practices and lessons learned from previous states and employer implementations.

SIDES is a web-based system that enables state UI agencies to exchange information with employers or their TPAs. SIDES is designed to reduce UI payments to ineligible claimants, yield administrative cost savings to both employers and taxpayers, and promote more timely benefit determinations.

For more information on SIDES, please contact SIDES Director Jerry Pectol at (918) 213-0029 or Jerry.Pectol@itsc.org.

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Notices, Advisories and Reports

USDOL Advisories

- [TEGL 19-14](#): Outlines the vision for the workforce system as a result of implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). It encourages workforce system leaders and partners to take immediate action to support successful implementation to fully realize the vision of WIOA. Finally, it provides an overview of upcoming guidance and technical assistance to support effective implementation of WIOA.
- [TEN 23-14](#): provides guidance to (1) assist the American Job Center (AJC) network operators and partners in filing TAA petitions on behalf of worker groups; (2) assist the State Workforce Agencies designated by the Governor as "Cooperating State Agencies" in carrying out their responsibilities regarding the submission of complete TAA petitions filed with the Department of Labor; and (3) improve the quality of TAA state-filed petitions by ensuring accurate information is disseminated to petitioners through partnerships with Rapid Response teams.
- [TEN 22-14](#): Announces the release and availability of the Significant Provisions of State Unemployment Insurance Laws Effective January 2015.
- [TEN 20-14](#): Assists State Workforce Agencies in administering the TAA program by identifying the FY 2015 Initial Allocation amounts to states and describing the formula methodology USDOL to calculate these amounts; and to describe the process for states to request TAA program reserve funds for training, employment and case management services, job search allowances, relocation allowances, and related state administration.
- [UIPL 11-15](#): Provides State Workforce Agencies guidelines and key dates for the completion of IPIA 2015 UI BAM paid and denied claims sample cases and the publication of IPIA 2015 BAM data.
- [UIPL 8-15, Change 1](#): Corrects the effective date of the federal military retired pay annual cost of living adjustment (COLA) published in UIPL No. 08-15, "Federal Military Pensions." The correct effective date of the military COLA increases is **December 1, 2014**.

Census Bureau

- **Statistics of U.S. Businesses — Employment and Payroll Summary: 2012** (*Released February 2015*)
The Census Bureau has released a [report](#) that presents industry and geography highlights from the Statistics of U.S. Businesses program. The data allows comparisons between business establishments that do similar work but are part of different-sized enterprises.

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For questions or comments, please contact NASWA Bulletin Editor Marc Katz at mkatz@naswa.org.