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NEWS RELEASE
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MEDIA ADVISORY

Santa Barbara Workforce Investment Board Pleased with Proposed Congressional Revamp of Job Training Programs

It was announced this week that a bipartisan, bicameral group of lawmakers had reached an agreement that could potentially improve the nation's workforce development system. This will not only streamline the way job-training programs are run but will also ensure these efforts and consistently funded.

The new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which is expected to be voted on by both the House and Senate, will replace the Workforce Investment Act passed in 1997. The new WIOA promises to streamline the workforce development system, add greater value, better coordination and to improve outreach to disconnected youth.

Examples of the proposed changes include:

- Disposing of duplication by eliminating 15 existing programs.
- Creating smaller, nimbler, and more strategic state and local workforce development boards.
- Empowering local boards to tailor services to their region's employment and workforce needs.
- Supporting access to real-world education and workforce development opportunities
- Aligning workforce development programs with economic development and education initiatives.
- Enabling businesses to identify in-demand skills and connect workers with the opportunities to build those skills.
- Ensuring individuals with disabilities have the skills necessary to be successful in businesses that provide competitive, integrated employment.
- Focusing youth program services on out-of-school youth, high school dropout recovery efforts, and attainment of recognized postsecondary credentials.

The program will also create more accountability, smaller local workforce boards and will guarantee funding levels for five years.

"The last time our existing Workforce Investment Act was reauthorized by Congress was 2003," explained Ray McDonald, Executive Director for the Barbara Workforce Investment Board, "the act has been kept on life support for almost a decade. Local boards have been experiencing more and more cuts in funding every year." He concluded, "This new proposed workforce legislation will revamp job training programs and modernize the existing workforce system."

Senator Tom Harkin, chairman of the Senate’s HELP Committee, who led the bipartisan, bicameral effort, said in a press release Wednesday that the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act will reauthorize the public workforce development system. It will emphasize access to real-world training opportunity by increasing the ability of local boards to use on-the-job training, incumbent worker training and customized training. It includes a strong focus on sector and career pathway strategies, prioritizes services for disconnected youth, and strengthens the connection between adult education, postsecondary education, and the workforce.

As more details become clear, the Santa Barbara WIB will have more comments on the proposed new legislation.

ABOUT THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD OF Santa Barbara COUNTY

The Workforce Investment Board, www.SantaBarbaraCountyWIB.org, is dedicated to serving the workforce needs of businesses, adults, laid-off workers and youth throughout Santa Barbara County. The WIB is a public/private partnership created by the Federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and is staffed by the County of Santa Barbara.

Job seekers and employers can take advantage of free services at two Workforce Resource Centers (“One-Stops”) to help find work or new employees. Programs include employment services for job seekers, the latest labor market information and regional workforce research for businesses, as well as training that specializes in helping people gain the skills and confidence necessary to find and obtain a job. The One-Stop Shops are at 1410 S. Broadway in Santa Maria, (805) 614-1550, and 130 E. Ortega Street in Santa Barbara, (805) 568-1296. Online information is available at www.workforceresource.com.