

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 23, 2008

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
156 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Specter:

As you prepare for the markup of the FY 2009 Labor-HHS Appropriations bill, we strongly urge you to reject the Administration's proposed funding cuts for Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs and its misguided proposal to consolidate funding streams. We also urge you to restore the \$250 million rescission of WIA formula funding enacted for Fiscal Year 2008.

These programs are urgently needed in these troubled economic times. Unemployment is rising and the economy is shedding jobs. Over the past 12 months, 1.6 million jobs have been lost across the country, with no clear end in sight. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that 2.4 million more workers are unemployed today than in 2001. When the number of unemployed workers is combined with those marginally attached to the labor force or too discouraged to look for work, a shocking 10.3 million Americans are unemployed. Our nation needs to be investing more, not less, in worker training and services for job seekers.

Despite this alarming trend, however, national investment in employment and training continues to diminish. In real dollars, funding for WIA programs has been reduced by nearly \$1.7 billion since FY 2001. Yet, in its FY 2009 budget proposal alone, the Administration recommended \$1.2 billion below FY 2008 funding levels for WIA (\$484 million) and Employment Services programs (\$703 million) combined. The proposal would effectively eliminate the Employment Service altogether, a program that -- according to the Administration's own figures -- helped over 12.6 million job seekers across the country find and obtain work in the 12-month period ending June 30, 2007.

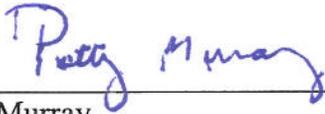
The Administration's proposed cuts come on top of a \$250 million rescission in WIA formula funding in the FY 2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act. The Department of Labor continues to insist that unexpended WIA "carryover" balances can be rescinded without undermining current services. However, the Department's own impact analysis directly contradicts its claims, and 44 states have asked to use current year funding to pay for at least part of their rescission allotment, because, they have no leftover balances from prior year funds. As a result, current services are being reduced around the nation at a time of even greater need for jobseekers.

WIA programs are specifically designed to assist workers affected by the economic slowdown, by helping them get the assistance and training they need to find family-wage jobs. This year, over 14 million workers -- one in ten workers nationally -- will seek help from the nation's employment and training programs. We urge the Committee to reject the Administration's additional cuts in these vital services and restore the \$250 million rescission.

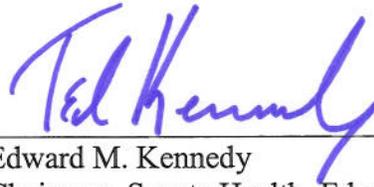
We appreciate your willingness to consider our views, and the Committee looks forward to continuing to work on these essential programs.

With respect and appreciation,

Sincerely



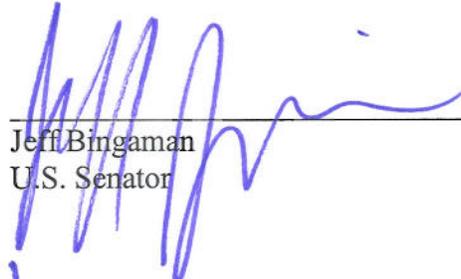
Patty Murray
Chair, Senate HELP Subcommittee on
Employment and Workplace Safety



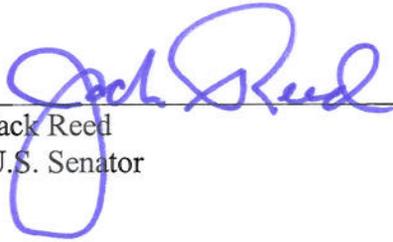
Edward M. Kennedy
Chairman, Senate Health, Education, Labor,
and Pensions Committee



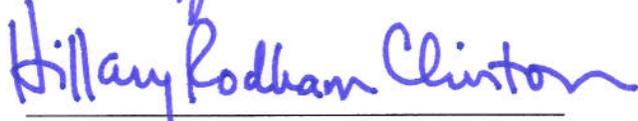
Barbara A. Mikulski
U.S. Senator



Jeff Bingaman
U.S. Senator



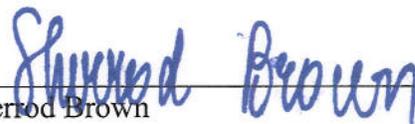
Jack Reed
U.S. Senator



Hillary Rodham Clinton
U.S. Senator



Barack Obama
U.S. Senator



Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senator



Charles E. Schumer
U.S. Senator