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Workforce Investment Improvement Act

Republicans are committed to a dynamic, results-oriented job training system that can effectively serve job seekers and workers in need of retraining. The *Workforce Investment Improvement Act* builds on reforms proposed by Republicans in recent years to strengthen and improve programs and services under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), administered through the nation's one-stop training center system. The bill will strengthen coordinating infrastructure, eliminate duplication, improve accountability, enhance the role of employers, and increase state and local flexibility to better serve our nation's workers. Together, these reforms will ensure the nation's workforce development system can respond quickly and effectively to the changing needs of job seekers and those in need of training.

Increasing efficiency, focusing on results:

- **Eliminating duplication and waste.** The bill creates a consolidated funding stream to streamline program administration and create more program efficiency at the state and local level. Funds continue to be targeted for those most in need of critical reemployment services. Priority is given to unemployed and low-income individuals in the adult grant program.
- **Ensuring the one-stop delivery system is demand-driven.** The bill requires state and local workforce investment boards to ensure that the system is dynamic and reflective of the workforce needs in the local area, and would increase connections to economic development. The measure also allows training for current workers so employers may upgrade their employees' skills, and would encourage the highest caliber training providers, including community colleges, to offer training through the one-stop system.
- **Strengthening employment services to help job seekers get back to work.** The bill ensures employment services will continue to be provided in the One Stop Career Centers. To be clear that such services will continue, the bill incorporates current employment service functions into the description of a new category known as work ready services. For example, one-stop centers will be required to provide labor exchange services, including job search and placement assistance, as well as appropriate recruitment services for employers.

Eliminating barriers to effective programs and services:

- **Increasing opportunities for training.** The bill enhances flexibility in the services that can be offered to job seekers, combining "core services" and "intensive services" into a new category of "work ready services," which will allow individuals to receive the services that best meet their needs.
- **Removing barriers to job training.** The bill eliminates arbitrary provisions of current law that prevent someone from accessing training immediately, even if it would be

appropriate to meet his or her employment goals. State and local areas would have the flexibility to tailor services to meet individuals' needs.

- **Allowing faith-based groups to help train and re-train workers.** The bill allows faith-based organizations to participate in the nation's job-training system. Democrat leaders believe faith-based groups should be forced to abandon their religious identities as a condition of participating in the WIA system, arguing such groups should not be allowed to take religion into account when hiring staff. But the 1964 Civil Rights Act gives faith-based groups the right to hire workers on a religious basis, and President Clinton himself signed a number of major laws upholding this right.

Fostering regional economic development:

- **Creating Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) plans.** To foster regional economic development, expand employment and advancement opportunities for workers, and promote the creation of high-skill and high-wage opportunities, the bill creates WIRED plans. These plans allow regional areas to integrate workforce development programs, one-stop services, and community and economic development funds into a comprehensive workforce development system.

Strengthening programs for targeted populations:

- **Improving adult education.** The bill improves adult education by increasing focus on delivery of the basic skills of reading, writing, speaking and math; ensuring that instructional practices are based on scientific research; and increasing accountability for states and local providers to have measurably improved results in basic skills, GED graduates, and those entering higher education.
- **Enhancing vocational rehabilitation.** The bill includes a number of provisions designed to strengthen the 1973 Rehabilitation Act in a continuing effort to help individuals with disabilities become employable and achieve full integration into society.
- **Focusing on youth with the greatest need while maintaining program flexibility.** As with previous Republican reform proposals, the bill would target a larger portion of WIA youth program funds (50 percent) to serve out-of-school youth, those most in need of training and assistance. However, the bill maintains flexibility to allow local communities to target their funding based on their local youth needs.