

STRENGTHEN THE WORKFORCE NOW
WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT (WIA)**Background**

WIA is the nation's employment and training bill, funding job training and adult literacy programs, such as English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL). WIA also includes program authorization for job training programs to farmworkers (Section 167) and farmworker youth (section 127).

Last week, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 27, the "Job Training Improvement Act," which would reauthorize WIA. H.R. 27 contains language in addressing challenges experienced by Latinos and immigrants, including persons with limited-English-proficient (LEP persons), such as adding ESL and integrated training projects in the types of allowable services offered to persons that are unable to find suitable employment. Although H.R. 27 included improvements, it does not go far enough in making the meaningful changes necessary to ensure access for Latino workers. NCLR supports the language contained in legislation recently introduced by the Senate, S. 9, the "Lifetime Education Opportunities Act of 2005," and believes it is a step forward in increasing education and training access for Latinos and all workers. NCLR urges the Senate and the House to champion the following provisions included in the Senate bill, S. 9.

Talking Points

- NCLR encourages bipartisan congressional leadership during Conference Committee in passing meaningful workforce legislation that would open job training opportunities for Latino workers. This is important because Latinos are a large and growing segment of today's and tomorrow's workforce.
- NCLR strongly urges the retention of minor, noncontroversial language friendly to Latinos and limited-English-proficient persons in the negotiated Conference bill. The addition of language from S. 9, which was neglected in H.R. 27, will go a long way in expanding service access for Latinos and all workers. Such language includes:
 - 1) Defining LEP persons as a "hard-to-serve" population to increase access for Latinos and other immigrants in the range of job training services provided through WIA.
 - 2) Requiring local agreements on how the needs of hard-to-serve populations are addressed in accessing services.
 - 3) Giving governors the discretion to reserve funding to enhance services for hard-to-serve populations.
 - 4) Authorizing language of at least \$10 million to fund and develop integrated training and English acquisition programs for immigrants. Integrated programs have a proven track record in communities nationwide, but are not often funded through the WIA system.
 - 5) Maintaining program funding for Farmworker Jobs Programs, Section 167 and 127, which provides culturally-competent services to and underserved, impoverished, and predominantly Latino segment of the workforce.

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