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September 2011

Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas



Dueling Jobs Proposals

The following information was provided as a Workforce Brief from the National Association of Workforce Boards and written by Ronald Painter.

Earlier this month, the Administration offered its American Jobs Act proposal which would provide \$447 billion in additional funding, through a combination of tax cuts and new investments, focused on putting Americans back to work. The Administration has offered to pay for this proposal by increasing taxes on wealthy Americans and the removal of tax breaks on a variety of special interests. All of these revenue offsets were rejected in earlier negotiations with Congress earlier this year.

On Thursday, September 15, Speaker of the House John Boehner (R-OH), offered his own ideas on job creation focused on the House Republicans, entitled "Plan for America's Job Creators" that would create new jobs by removing tax and regulatory barriers to private sector growth.

These dueling approaches highlight the stark differences between the parties on jobs creation and it remains to be seen whether the parties will be able to find common ground in policies to help put Americans back to work.

Administration officials that NAWB has spoken with expect that elements of the President's jobs proposal will ultimately be included in the plan for debt reduction that the "Congressional Supercommittee" must present to Congress before Thanksgiving. The Supercommittee's recommendations are viewed as must pass legislation by many in Congress, as a 7.8% across the board cut is looming for most programs in FY 13 if the Supercommittee's recommendations for savings are not enacted before the end of the year.

If components of the Administration's jobs proposal do end up

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Upcoming Events

Job News Job Fair:
September 30, 2011,
10:00 a.m. to
2:00 p.m. at the Hyatt
Regency Wichita.

32nd Annual Economic
Outlook Conference
Thursday, October 6,
2011 7:30 a.m. to 11:30
a.m. Century II
Convention Hall

Workforce Alliance
Executive Committee:
Tuesday, October 18,
2011, 11:30 am at the
Wichita Workforce
Center.

Workforce Alliance Board
of Directors Meeting:
Thursday, December 15,
2011, 10:30 am at the

getting included in the Supercommittee's bill, it will add to the \$1.1 trillion in savings the Supercommittee is mandated to recommend (according to CBO's latest estimates) over the next ten years.

While there was largely a courteous reception to the President's proposal at the Joint Session of Congress last week, the partisan rancor has edged up a notch as the President holds rallies this week in support of his proposal in each of the states of Members of the House and Senate Republican leadership. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) sharply criticized the President's proposal on the Senate floor on Tuesday and it appears that the parties positions are already beginning to harden.

What do you need to know about the President's jobs proposal?

The bill would create a new \$5 billion Pathways to Work fund that is comprised of three elements:

- 1) \$2 billion for subsidized employment - this proposal would build off of the Recovery Act's TANF Emergency Fund, which helped put 250,000 workers into transitional jobs. However, there are some differences from the TANF Emergency Fund from this proposal, as the new fund would be targeted to adults and overseen by DOL, allowing states to utilize either their TANF or Workforce agencies (or both) to provide localities with formula funds to operate these transitional jobs programs. The TANF emergency fund had solely been operated by HHS and was also a significant mechanism to provide summer jobs funding.
- 2) \$1.5 billion for summer and year round youth activities - this funding would be provided through the WIA formula to localities to assist youth ages 16-24 in educational and occupational attainment.
- 3) \$1.5 billion competitive grant program to assist low income adults and youth - this fund would allow DOL to provide national grants to local areas and regions to help put people back to work expeditiously utilizing programs of demonstrated effectiveness. The eligible entity for these grants would be the local chief elected official, in partnership with the WIB, and could include a variety of models and additional partners such as adult education and literacy providers, community colleges, and CBOs. High poverty and high unemployment areas would be priorities for funding.

City-to-City through the Eyes of a Newbie

Written by: Kimberly Cronister, Public Information Officer

It isn't every day that you find 60 bright eyed, motivated, and passionate people together in an airport terminal at 5:00 in the morning. But, on Wednesday, September 14th that's exactly what

Wichita Workforce Center.

Workforce Alliance Mission & Vision

The mission of the Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas is to develop and lead a flexible, integrated workforce system that identifies and responds to the current and future needs of our region and state.

Our vision is for south central Kansas to have a diversified, inclusive, highly skilled workforce functioning within a flexible, accessible system of education and economic development to advance the quality of life and standard of living for all workers in our region and state.

Positive Feedback!

"I want to say thank you to the team at the Workforce Center. The coordination effort of the job fairs and information

you found at ICT. The packed agenda and the early flight didn't kill the mood of the Visioneering Wichita City to City trip to Pittsburgh, PA. As a newbie to the trip, I wasn't sure what to expect. But feeding off the eagerness of my travel companions (many who had been on multiple city to city trips), I hoped to be impressed with a few good ideas in the next three days.

Immediately upon arrival in Pittsburgh the group loaded the bus and headed downtown. Arriving at the hotel we didn't stop to check in or drop off our luggage. As a matter of fact, we barely had time to fill our plate with a quick lunch before settling in to hear from the first speaker, Bill Strickland. Mr. Strickland is the author of *Make the Impossible Possible* and the CEO of Manchester Craftsmen's Guild. His story about the creation of Manchester Bidwell, a school that reaches inner city youth with arts and job training, was the first of many stories that would leave an impression on me.

The [Pittsburgh Promise](#) was the next attention grabber of the day. All children who graduate from Pittsburgh Public Schools with an average GPA of 2.5 and an attendance record of 90% have the chance to earn a \$40,000 scholarship to attend any accredited post-secondary institution in Pennsylvania.

Day one ended with a visit to the [David Lawrence Convention Center](#), the first LEED certified convention center in North America. We had dinner at the Center and following dinner we had the opportunity to view Pittsburgh from the Center's rooftop. It was at the roof of the Center where many people realized what an amazing city we were visiting.

On day two, we got to sleep in a little. Our first speaker wasn't scheduled until 7:30 a.m. After the morning session we took a bus tour of the city. The first stop on the tour was [Pittsburgh School for the Creative and Performing Arts](#) (CAPA). CAPA is a public magnet school where kids in grades 6-12 have the opportunity to excel academically and artistically to reach their full potential.

After the tour of CAPA we headed to Park Place University for a panel discussion with more city leaders, lunch, and a chance to debrief as a group. The afternoon stop was a tour of [Manchester Bidwell](#), the school Bill Strickland told us so much about on day one. This was our chance to see if the school really was as amazing as he led us to believe...it was! Being part of an organization that leads the workforce development system in Wichita, the tour of Manchester Bidwell left me with many ideas and burning questions. The Center offers free classes, many which lead to certificates and job opportunities. The Center is privately funded and it was said during the tour that they refuse to take federal funding. The Center is a testament to Strickland's determination to believe in and give everyone a chance to succeed.

After Manchester Bidwell we headed back to the hotel to get

classes were very helpful. Each associate at the Wichita Contact Center benefited from every interaction your team had with us. Thank you again for your partnership & support."

Wendy Muir, VP, Senior Operations Manager
Bank of America

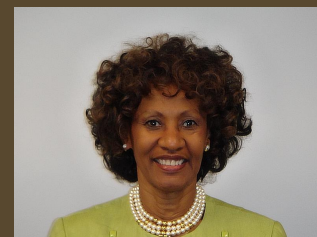
"The computers, telephones, and fax machines in the Workforce Center were helpful, but the customer service I received kept me coming back until I found a job."

A Recent Workforce Center Customer

"Technology has changed the way you look for and apply for jobs. The Workforce Center helped me get back up to speed and now I have a job."

A Recent Workforce Center Customer

Board of Directors
Spotlight



ready for dinner. The group was split up and sent to 4 different restaurants. My group enjoyed local Cajun cuisine at a restaurant called Nola and then decided to have a second dinner! We had heard about a local sandwich shop called Primanti Brothers that served sandwiches with fries in the middle. The shop was just across the street from Nola and we couldn't leave Pittsburgh without giving it a try. Although one meal was enough for me, I enjoyed watching the others tackle their fry stuffed sandwiches.

The last day of the trip was just as busy as the first. Friday morning we soaked up two more interesting speakers before our departure. On the bus ride back to the airport I stopped to think about all the unbelievable things that had happened in such a short time. One...I managed to survive the first time ever leaving my baby for more than 24 hours. Two...I left Pittsburgh recharged, inspired and ready to get involved and make things happen. Three...I made great friends and developed a whole new appreciation for Wichita. What now...let's create a Wichita Promise!



Career Pathways Summit - A SUCCESS!

The 2011 Keeping Kansas Competitive: Career Pathways Summit was held on June 1-2 with more than 150 people in attendance. Workforce development professionals, adult basic education providers, employers, and community based organizations from the entire State came together in Topeka to discuss how to prepare tomorrow's workforce for industry demands. The follow-up survey confirms the Summit was a success, 87 percent of survey respondents said they would attend another career pathways event. The following is one of many positive responses received.

"This was a well organized event and provided tons of useful information. The networking was great and I learned many things that I will take back to my job. Hopefully the follow through on

MARY K. VAUGHN City of Wichita

Mary K. Vaughn is the Director of the City of Wichita Housing and Community Services Department and is responsible for a variety of affordable housing and programs including management of 578 units of Public Housing and over 2,500 Housing Choice Vouchers. In addition to these Housing Authority programs, the department provides funding for home repairs for income-eligible homeowners, and down payment and closing cost assistance for income-eligible first time homebuyers. The department is also responsible for managing over \$3M in Community Development Block Grant-funded programs on an annual basis, as well as other federal sources, which results in a variety of housing, infrastructure and social service program support. In 2009, the department began administering over \$2M was provided through the ARRA program, to prevent homelessness, house the homeless and provide sidewalk repair and façade improvements. This was in addition to housing programs for homeless veterans and the chronically homeless which are provided on an annual basis. The department's program portfolio is rounded out

many things will be great as well. It was nice to confirm that a lot of things that we are already doing are in sync with what was touched on at the summit and we can continue to provide great services to job seekers moving forward."

The presentations, final report and handouts have been uploaded to the [Workforce Center website](#).



The Age is an asset. Experience, a benefit.

Employers value the talents older workers bring to the workforce. The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), a federally funded job training program operated by the Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas, is working to give low-income older-Americans an "earn to learn" opportunity.

"This program is unique in that senior participants can serve their community while expanding their skills and earning income," states SCSEP Program Manager Lori Ellison-Zuercher. "Eligible participants are placed in part-time community service training assignments to gain relevant work experience that will help move them into regular employment."

SCSEP participant Lindy Heddin agrees. "The senior program has been a life saver. After being out of the workforce more than 10 years, my computer skills were outdated which meant I was no longer job ready. SCSEP was the perfect answer. Not only do I now have relevant work experience, I've upgraded my computer skills. What once looked like the end of my gainful employment has become the beginning of a busy, productive and enjoyable lifestyle. It sure feels good to be back in the swing of things."

"Older people need to be able to stay working as long as they wish," adds participant Alice Gipson. "SCSEP has taught me that age does not matter, and we can still be a valued worker in the workforce today. All older people want to feel useful; this program builds your self esteem."

SCSEP is recruiting participants in Cowley, Sumner, Kingman and Harper counties. To find out more about SCSEP, contact the Workforce Alliance SCSEP office at 316-771-6750.

with the services provided by the Career Development Office which serves Sedgwick County as the Community Action Agency, where the goal is to alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty. Ms. Vaughn is a native of Kansas City, Missouri and has a Master's Degree in Social Work from Rutgers University. She has spent her entire professional career in local or Federal government in Kansas City, Chicago, Dallas and now Wichita.

How did you become involved with the Workforce Alliance?

My official involvement with the WA began with my designation to the board by the Wichita City Manager in February of this year. However I have worked with the WA on special projects for several years, including the New Communities Initiative. In addition, when I was in Kansas City I was active with the Private Industry Council which is the precursor to today's Workforce programs. The fit for me then and now, is the direct connection between people being gainfully employed and their being able to move from dependency on government support to self-sufficiency. I'm excited to be a part of the WA and in a position to strengthen that connection.

NOTE: From the Director

Just when it seemed that the economy would begin to turn around, it appears job growth has stalled and is not as robust as expected. After months of seeing the unemployment rate for the region slowly decline, it has taken an uncomfortable turn upwards over the past three months. The overall rates are still lower when compared to 2009 and 2010, but 2011 has not met employment forecasts and economic growth projections. This is the case not only for our region, but the national economy as well.

What it means for the Workforce Alliance is we are still seeing way too many people struggling to find jobs. At the same time, we are also hearing from employers that they are having a hard time finding qualified workers. This affirms to me that we do not have a labor shortage, but a skills gap. As has been well documented and much discussed amongst members of our Board of Directors and employer partners, skills matter and often are making the difference in a person landing a job. And while having a degree or certificate does not guarantee employment, it does make a huge difference in a very competitive job market.

Overall, 60 to 70 percent of the job seekers that access services through the Workforce Centers in South Central Kansas do find employment. I wish this percentage was higher, but when there is an average of six-and often more-applicants per job opening, we are able to provide a noticeable competitive advantage to the individuals that access our services.

In speaking with employers over the past few weeks I remain optimistic that there will be increased hiring and job growth in the region. Of course the timing for significant employment expansion is hard to pin down, but there are employers actively seeking skilled workers now. However, it will take a lot of employment growth to make up for the job losses that occurred in 2008 and 2009. The best role for the Workforce Alliance in this is to continue to focus on industry driven training to equip job seekers with the needed education to help close the growing skills gap.

The economic future for the region, state and county remain murky, and the key is job growth. There is no magic wand or short cuts to economic expansion. The best way to support job growth is through skills training. So the Workforce Alliance will continue to focus its efforts to do just this; and it will take a collective effort from the Board, staff and partners to be successful.

Labor Market Information

The August 2011 unemployment rates for Kansas (6.9 percent) and Local Area IV (8.1 percent) increased slightly from July 2011. Four of the 11 major industries in Kansas reported over-the-month job gains. Those gains were made in business and professional services, leisure and hospitality and manufacturing.

Local Unemployment Rates by County

Butler - 7.7%
Cowley - 7.1%
Harper - 5.6%
Kingman - 5.8%
Sedgwick - 8.3%
Sumner - 7.6%

View the entire August 2011 Labor Report including current layoff numbers by visiting the [Workforce Center website](#).



This is a publication of the Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas.
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