

The Adult Education and Economic Growth (AEEG) Act of 2009

WHAT THE BILL WOULD DO

Encourage investment in lower skilled workers by providing employers with a tax credit.

Both employers and lower skilled working adults currently under-invest in adult education, English language training, and workplace skills necessary to ensure they can successfully move up the employment ladder and pursue postsecondary education. Population demographics tell us that our workforce is growing exactly among this lower skilled group of working adults from a variety of backgrounds, in particular, among minority and immigrant communities. It is critical to our national competitiveness that we build bridges to sound workplace skills and postsecondary education for a growing part of our workforce.

Action: AEEG creates a tax credit to encourage employers to invest in adult basic education and workplace skills.

Increase access to correctional education programs and provide for added accountability in the system.

Offenders with education and training are statistically less likely to commit crimes after release. There is a direct correlation between education level and recidivism: the higher the education level, the lower the recidivism rate. A decrease in recidivism reduces costs to taxpayers and keeps our communities safer.

Action: Currently, states may not use more than 10 percent of funds for corrections education. The AEEG Act would establish 10 percent as a minimum to be used for corrections education. The Act also requires a report on how the funding is being used to ensure that we are effectively preparing these individuals to become productive members of our society.

Increase access to adult education, literacy, and workplace skills through the use of technology.

Technology increases the ability to reach adults at times and places convenient to them. By 2006, 73 percent of American adults were online, including those at the lowest literacy levels. We cannot reach all of those needing services without deploying technology to provide services outside the classroom walls.

Action: Create incentives for states and local service providers to increase their use of technology, fund development of a national adult education and workforce skills training web portal, and create incentives for states to use the portal and other technology as tools for better integrating their workforce skills training and adult education programs.

Ensure our adult education system prepares adult students to meet workforce and educational needs.

Attainment of a high school diploma or a GED is an important goal, but does not necessarily prepare adults for postsecondary education or the workforce. In fact, the National Commission on Adult Literacy reports that about 85 percent of GED graduates must take at least one remedial course before they can enroll in postsecondary education.

Action: Through the Adult Education and Economic Growth (AEEG) Act, modify program goals of Title I and Title II of the Workforce Investment Act to place greater emphasis on adult education, literacy, and workplace skills services for adults and bring about coordination of goals and outcomes among federal programs.

Empower our workforce with adequate resources and effective and innovative educational and workforce programs.

Too many low-skilled workers are stuck in jobs that do not provide them with a career pathway that ultimately leads to a family-sustaining wage. Only 3 to 4 percent of the workers with the most limited literacy proficiencies receive basic skills training from their employers.

Action: Encourage collaboration between education, labor and business to provide education and training for low-skilled incumbent workers, create incentives for business to improve employee skills, and encourage states to increase the participation of incumbent workers in their workforce training and adult education programs.

Expand access by ensuring that federal funding formulas accurately take into account the adult education and workforce skills needs of individual states.

For example, in English as a Second Language (ESL), states are provided with federal funding according to a formula based on the number of individuals without a high school diploma. However, a large part of a state's need is based on the percentage of their population that speaks English. In ESL and other adult education areas, many states are struggling to provide the requisite services under outdated program goals and funding formulas.

Action: Revise funding formulas to ensure that states receive funding according to the demographics and needs of their populations including the needs of their non-English speaking population.