

Many of the federal government's most useful tools to address the needs of people who have lost their jobs come from the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), the primary federal program that supports job training. Last week I invited our nation's top WIA official, Assistant Secretary of Labor Jane Oates, to meet with more than a dozen officials from New Jersey's county job training boards to find ways to put more people back to work.

Enacted in 1998, WIA created a single, universal employment and job training system – the one-stop career system – to serve the needs of all job seekers and employers. Today there are roughly 3,000 one-stop centers operating nationwide, serving millions of U.S. workers every year. Unfortunately, although WIA's initial passage was bipartisan, its much-needed reauthorization has come under partisan attack in Washington.

The WIA bill put forth by the Tea Party majority, which could be debated in the U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce as early as next week, slashes workforce investment under the guise of improving it. The bill would effectively eliminate many programs, and it would freeze WIA funding at a time when unemployment remains far too high. The result would be reduced services to the lowest-skilled adults, English language learners, people with disabilities, youth, women, and other individuals with barriers to employment.

We should be modernizing and WIA for the 21st century. I am a cosponsor of an alternative bill that would streamline and improve workforce investment system programs, strengthen workforce investment system accountability, and promote innovation and best practices within the workforce investment system. The bill also includes provisions I wrote to support online job training and to recognize and enhance the job training services that libraries provide.

Even now, 12.5 million Americans are striving to find work but proving unable to do so – often for no fault of their own. Our economy's future depends upon us doing everything we can to help.

Extended Opportunity to Comment on Seismic Surveys near New Jersey's Coast

The Interior Department announced this week that, because of concerns that I and others

raised at a recent Congressional hearing, it has extended the comment period for its [proposal to conduct seismic surveys](#) in the mid- and south Atlantic.

Seismic surveys, which are the first step toward offshore drilling, involve using airguns to blast the ocean with extremely loud sound waves – potentially loud enough to damage wildlife and disrupt the local fishing and tourism economies.

The original, brief comment period seemed to be a form of box-checking, a way to say that public opinion had been sought without providing stakeholders enough time to comment intelligently. This extension demonstrates that the Interior Department is being more responsive to the concerns of the public. I will continue to oppose drilling off of our coast.

Free Annual Pass to National Parks for Military Personnel

One of many ways that the U.S. recognizes the service of our soldiers is by offering free admission to many of our nation's most extraordinary parks and wilderness areas.

Active-duty U.S. military personnel and their dependents are eligible for a free annual pass that covers entrance and standard amenity fees to lands managed by the National Park Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Bureau of Reclamation.

You can acquire your pass by presenting your U.S. military ID or Dependent ID Form at most federal lands that charge an entrance fee. A list of these sites is [available online](#), as is further information on the [free military annual pass program](#).

Sincerely,

Rush Holt
Member of Congress