

For Immediate Release

July 16, 2009

Contacts: Kerrie Bennett (Kennedy) 401-729-5600

Teno Villarreal (Hinojosa) (202) 202-2531

**KENNEDY, HINOJOSA INTRODUCE
*ADULT EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC GROWTH ACT***

Legislation Would Prepare Workers for 'New Economy' Jobs

Washington, DC (July 16, 2009) – Congressmen Patrick J. Kennedy (RI-01) and Ruben Hinojosa (TX-15) today announced the introduction of the Adult Education and Economic Growth (AEEG) Act of 2009. The legislation would increase the scope and effectiveness of adult education, literacy, and workplace skills programs to ensure adult Americans are prepared for the jobs of the future.

In introducing the bill, Kennedy and Hinojosa pointed to a report issued earlier this week by the President's Council of Economic Advisors, *Preparing the Workers of Today for the Jobs of Tomorrow*, which stated, "A well-functioning post-high school education and training system cannot be achieved with the current, often conflicting and confusing, maze of job-training programs spread across several federal agencies." The Adult Education and Economic Growth Act (AEEG) addresses these challenges by developing an adult education, literacy, and work skills system that coordinates greater involvement of business leaders, state agencies, the adult education community, and workforce leaders so that adult students are better and more broadly served. The AEEG Act goes even further to enhance the use of technology, increases funding to meet the growing demand for adult education services and also adjusts the federal funding formulas to better meet the needs of states.

"The road to economic recovery requires our nation's workforce be prepared for a global economy. Unfortunately, 80 to 90 million adults in this country have deficiencies in basic education. In my district, over 23% of the adult population does not have a diploma. We must ensure that adult education and workforce training programs have the tools and resources they need to prepare our workers for the next generation of jobs in energy, health care,

aerospace and technology,” said Kennedy, a member of the House Appropriations Committee. “The Adult Education and Economic Growth Act is designed to address these challenges. By greatly improving the coordination between adult education and job training, this legislation will make sure our nation’s workforce is positioned to compete for the higher-skilled jobs of a new economy,” said Kennedy.

“We are facing the greatest world economic crisis since the Great Depression. We need to re-tool our economy and that starts with investing in our people” said Congressman Hinojosa, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Competitiveness. “The Adult Education and Economic Growth Act accomplishes that task by creating and enhancing adult education, literacy, and workplace skills programs across the country that will better prepare Americans to face the challenges of our new economic reality.”

The Adult Education and Economic Growth (AEEG) Act aims to improve access to innovative and effective workforce and education programs to help meet the demands of a 21st century workforce. The bill would:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

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

Creates a new adult education technology program for states and local service providers to expand access and services through the use of technology, and funds the development of a national adult education web portal.

Current adult education services reach only 3 million adults annually and were not designed for today's global economic challenges. According to the National Commission on Adult Literacy, 80 to 90 million U.S. adults today, about half of the adult workforce, do not have the basic education and communication skills required to obtain jobs that pay a family-sustaining wage. 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.

In literacy, English language learning and other adult education areas, many states are struggling to provide the requisite services under outdated program goals and funding formulas. 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.

Senators Webb and Brown will introduce companion legislation in the Senate.

#

Kerrie Bennett
Press Secretary
[Rep. Patrick Kennedy \(RI-01\)](#)
p. 401-729-5600