

The National Association of State Workforce Board Chairs
Loews L'Enfant Plaza Hotel, Washington, DC
March 5-7, 2005
Summary of Meeting

In attendance:

Mona McAleese and David Stone, Alaska; Dennis Hopper and Ken Tucker, Alabama; Sandra Winston, Arkansas; Debra Raeder, Arizona; Lawrence Gotlieb and Paul Gussman, California; Booker Graves, Elise Lowe-Vaughn, and Mark Pingrey, Colorado; Wallace Barnes, Connecticut; Jim Hardegree and Gloria Kusmik, Georgia; Ann Yamamoto, Hawaii; Diane Goode and Norma Schmoker, Iowa; Cheryl Brush and Karen McGee, Idaho; Peter Torkildsen, Massachusetts; Brenda Norman, Minnesota; Lewis Chartock and Steven Kraus, Missouri; Pam Watson, Montana; Margaret Moree, New York; Norma Noble and Terry Watson, Oklahoma; Gwyn Harvey and Greg White, Oregon; Geri Guardino, Rhode Island; Pat Hudson, South Carolina; Dr. Steve Copeland and Paul Haynes, Tennessee; Cheryl Fuller and Ann Hodge, Texas; Barbara Bolin, Marge Connelly, Katherine DeRosear, and Gail Robinson, Virginia; David Harrison and Ellen O'Brien Saunders, Washington; Charles Ware, Wyoming.

Saturday 3/5/05

Opening Session – Legislative Update and Discussion on Reauthorization of WIA

Moderator: Joan Wodiska, NGA

Jane Oates, U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP)

Beth Beuhmann, U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP)

- Joan Wodiska, Director of the Education, Early Childhood, and Workforce Committee of the National Governors Association (NGA), provided a brief overview of the Job Training Improvement Act (H.R. 27) which was passed by the House of Representatives on March 2, 2005 reauthorizing the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA). H.R. 27 consolidates the employment services, WIA adult, and WIA dislocated worker funding streams into a single state block grant.
- Governors recently adopted a new policy position on workforce excellence at the annual NGA Winter Meeting. Some of the key positions in the new policy include that Congress should provide governors the option of combining WIA, TANF, higher education, and other federal training funds at the state level in order to respond to the unique needs of their constituencies. Governors also request that Section 191(A) be repealed so that WIA funds would not need approval from state legislatures to be allocated. Importantly, the new policy position states that federal investment in WIA should continue at the same level and that there needs to be a joint effort at the federal level to simplify reporting requirements among various programs.
- Beth Beuhmann of the U.S. Senate HELP Committee, Office of Senator Enzi, discussed many of the Senator's views on the need to improve the workforce and educational systems. She noted that the Senate will mark up several pieces of legislation in the near future, which are all vital to improve our workforce and economy. Ms. Beuhmann indicated that the HELP Committee will be starting off its work on WIA based on the Senate bill that was created last year. Senator Enzi believes that it is important to focus efforts on assisting small to medium-size business owners, meeting the needs of rural states, and leveraging existing resources available through WIA, TANF, Perkins, and others to improve the workforce and education systems.
- Jane Oates of the U.S. Senate HELP Committee, Office of Senator Kennedy, shed additional light onto the Senate's plans regarding WIA reauthorization. Ms. Oates noted that Senator Kennedy has voiced a commitment to providing waiver authority under WIA and that the reauthorized legislation

must reflect a balance between the needs of various stakeholders. It is important that the Senate obtains feedback regarding the specifics of the program in order to craft an effective piece of legislation for everyone involved in the system.

- Both panelists noted that the Bush Administration's proposal included a provision known as "WIA Plus," (see second bullet below) which in all likelihood will not be included in the Senate bill nor is it included in H.R. 27. Ms. Oates also noted that her office is concerned about merging Wagner-Peyser funds with WIA dislocated and adult funds (as included in the House bill), with Ms. Beuhmann echoing these same concerns from Senator Enzi's office. Both panelists urged meeting attendees to contact their Senators and ask them, in turn, to contact both Senator Enzi and Senator Kennedy regarding specific concerns on the reauthorization of WIA.

Presentation – A Dialogue on Emerging National Workforce Policy

Emily DeRocco, Assistant Secretary, Employment and Training Administration, Department of Labor

Assistant Secretary DeRocco started the dialogue stating that there is a sense of urgency surrounding workforce issues due to the dynamics of the global economy and the need for WIA and other federal programs to truly improve our workforce and economic development capabilities. She also made the following points regarding the Bush Administration's WIA Plus proposal:

- Under WIA Plus, funding streams would be consolidated from WIA adult, WIA dislocated, WIA youth, and Wagner-Peyser, as well as allow governors the option of consolidating five additional federal job training and employment programs. Up to \$15 billion in combined funds would be available within the nine programs that are included in the WIA Plus proposal.
- The intention of the WIA Plus proposal is to provide governors with more flexibility, reduce redundancy within the system, simplify reporting requirements, and develop a more holistic workforce system within their states. The "vision" of WIA has not been achieved since it was first created and the system is not currently integrated.

Assistant Secretary DeRocco urged members of the Chairs' Association to contact the Senate as well as have their governors contact Senators in order to ensure that WIA is strengthened upon reauthorization.

Sunday 3/6/05

Presentation – Advances within the Low-Wage Labor Market

Harry Holzer, Professor of Economics, Georgetown University

Diana Bamford-Rees, Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)

- Dr. Harry Holzer discussed findings from his new book, *Moving Up or Moving On* which offers a broad view on how to help advance low-wage workers in the labor market. Dr. Holzer's research evaluates several main questions including how people advance in the labor market, what are the characteristics of firms hiring low-wage workers, and what strategies can help individuals advance within the labor market. Some of the policy implications from Dr. Holzer's research include that labor market intermediaries can assist individuals in advancing in the workforce, training and job placement services should be integrated, the sequence of appropriate job placements and training over time is critical, and that data and technical assistance should be provided to local workforce boards to more effectively assist low-wage workers.
- Diana Bamford-Rees discussed the CAEL/DOL Nursing Career Lattice Program, designed to offer an apprenticeship model to help solve nursing shortages. The career lattice program is a

competency-based approach that provides experience and learning opportunities to both incumbent and new employees. Partners involved in the program include local workforce investment boards, local healthcare employers, state nursing boards, community colleges, and local Department of Labor offices. The program, currently piloted in five sites, offers three levels of training including Certified Nurse Assistant (CAN) apprenticeships, Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) apprenticeships, and an online LPN to RN degree program. There has been a very high rate of completion among participants as a result of the flexibility inherent in the program, which combines work experience and on-the-job training. More information can be found at <http://www.cael.org/healthcare.htm>

Discussion - Update on Peer-to-Peer Network Website

Greg White presented an update on the Peer-to-Peer network that has been developed as a way of sharing best practices and improving communication among the Chairs and directors. Colorado is hosting the website at <http://www.e-colorado.org>. The Association will develop a way to categorize and sort the information so that individuals will be able to search the database once it is populated. Each state is responsible for keeping information current. Instructions on how to enter and update information on the website will be emailed. It is recommended that Chairs and others also visit the "Promising Practices" link on the e-colorado website which provides valuable information on workforce development activities.

Discussion – Linking Workforce and Economic Development: A Report Back from Members on Successful Practices

At the annual meeting in August, Association members agreed to report back on activities that their state had undertaken that successfully link workforce development and economic development. Some of the common activities developed by states included:

- Offering various local and state personnel the course developed by the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB), which pertains to building partnerships between workforce and economic development;
- Holding joint summits or state-wide conferences between economic development and workforce development agencies;
- Structuring state and local workforce boards so that leaders within the economic development community are members and have input into policy development;
- Developing regional or local partnerships between workforce development and economic development that focus on the specific needs of area businesses;
- Paying the membership fees of local workforce personnel in order for them to join economic development professional associations; and
- Providing workforce development support to identified regional clusters or emerging industries within a state.

Discussion - How Can State Boards Assist in Linking Education and Workforce Development

Association members were asked to discuss barriers or issues that states often face in linking workforce development to education, both with the K-12 system and postsecondary institutions. Several of the main themes that emerged from this discussion include:

- Governance systems can often help or hinder partnerships with workforce development;
- Educational systems are local in nature, making it sometimes difficult to develop state-wide efforts to link the two systems together;
- Lack of interest and involvement on the part of business regarding the education system;

- Cultural or "mindset" differences between the two systems as well as tight funding levels in both areas;
- Students who are not going to college often do not know of other available career paths that can lead to success in the workforce; and
- Schools are not teaching children and adults the skills that are currently demanded by businesses.

Association members were asked to discuss methods of removing these barriers during the separate sessions for Chairs and Staff Directors.

Monday 3/7/05

Presentation – “Redesigning the American High School”

Susan Sclafani, Assistant Secretary, Office of Vocational and Adult Education
Bridget Curran, Senior Policy Analyst, NGA Center for Best Practices

- Dr. Sclafani discussed several of the critical reasons why it is important to redesign the high school and strengthen our education system as a whole. Technology and smaller, more individualized learning opportunities must exist in order to better prepare our students for the workforce. Importantly, teachers also need better technology training than what is currently available in order to integrate technology into the learning experience.
- A key factor in developing successful smaller learning communities is bringing career and technical education into the classroom. Businesses must connect better to the education system. Being "college ready" does not mean that every child will go to college - it means that every child should be prepared to succeed in the workforce and in higher education.
- Bridget Curran spoke on the Governors' Education Summit, which featured the NGA Chairman's Initiative: "Redesigning the American High School." The Summit was well received by governors and presented some upfront solutions that states could begin to implement in order to strengthen high schools. Several key outcomes from the meeting include:
 - There is not an unanimous sense of urgency felt around the country that high schools are failing;
 - The business community is a key player in helping to improve high schools;
 - Higher education must become more engaged in this issue; and
 - Governance changes are likely needed to truly improve the high school system.
- As a result of the Summit, an action network of 13 states has been formed that is committed to aligning high schools with postsecondary institutions. Grant money totaling almost \$42 millions will be awarded to states (with matching requirements) through NGA to help improve graduation rates and begin to tackle some of the issues discussed at the conference.
- Both Dr. Sclafani and Ms. Curran noted that State Workforce Investment Boards can play a key role in helping to improve the education system by collaborating with other boards such as the State Education Board, principals associations, teachers' unions, superintendents, etc.

Presentation – GAO Report on Employer Satisfaction with One-Stop Services

Sigurd Nilsen, Government Accountability Office, Education, Workforce, and Income Security Division

- Mr. Sigurd Nilsen, Director of Education at GAO, presented information on a new study (GAO-05-259) that evaluated employer use, awareness, and satisfaction with one-stop services. Overall, findings from the study are quite positive with employers rating one-stop services high. Larger

businesses were more aware of the services provided by one-stop centers and were also more likely to use services. A link to the full report will be posted on the Chairs website once it is released in full.

Business Meeting

- Report from Chairs Breakout Session:
 - The Chairs identified several action steps that can be taken to strengthen the link between workforce and education. These include: staying informed of issues; connecting with Governors' involvement in the high school Summit; picking areas where Boards can partner effectively and pursue actions; and developing special initiatives such as youth summits. It was suggested that state board choose areas that they can truly influence.
 - The Chairs also discussed WIA reauthorization and indicated that the March 2004 joint letter with NASWA and the State Workforce Liaisons will be used as a starting point for refining the Chairs' Association key positions. The Executive Committee will draft a set of recommendations for review and comment.
 - Topics that the Chairs would like to discuss at the upcoming Summer Meeting include WIA reauthorization, drug use as related to the workforce, prisoner reentry, how to engage small and medium-size businesses, and Governors' action on high school reform. Members are invited to suggest other topics.
- Report from Staff Directors Breakout Session:
 - Staff Directors also discussed steps that workforce boards can take to strengthen the connection to education. Boards should start with easy connections and then move to more difficult areas. Importantly, a common language must be established between the two entities and governors must convene parties together to truly make a difference in outcomes.
 - Governors should be given the flexibility that they need in regards to WIA reauthorization. Staff Directors also need to support their Chairs on understanding the specifics of reauthorization.
 - Staff Directors recommended that the Chairs include support for the recent Integrated Performance Information (IPI) recommendations in WIA reauthorization.
 - Other WIA titles also need to be evaluated in order to understand potential changes that could occur to adult education and vocational rehabilitation with reauthorization.
- The Association agreed to review the reauthorization recommendations it made last year in a joint statement with NASWA and the state liaisons association. The Executive Committee will consider both the new NGA policy positions and the IPI report in its review.
- The summer meeting will be held in Portland, Oregon. A specific date has yet to be established, but the meeting will probably occur sometime in late August beginning on a Sunday afternoon with a New Chairs' Orientation and continuing through lunch on Wednesday. Details will be sent out once more information on the meeting is known.