



**NATIONAL SKILLS COALITION**  
Every worker. Every industry. A strong economy.

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**As High Unemployment Continues, Business Leaders Come to Washington  
to Propose Targeted Solution to Nation's Skills Gap**

**Washington, DC**—This week, employers in manufacturing, health care, construction, and clean energy came to Washington to meet with high level policymakers to discuss skill gaps in their industries, how an industry driven training approach known as sector partnerships can help fill those gaps, and why the SECTORS Act should be passed immediately. In July, with bi-partisan, unanimous support, the [House of Representatives passed the SECTORS Act](#), which would dedicate federal support to sector partnerships. The Senate has yet to pass the Act.

“Newly skilled workers, trained in collaboration with employers will be vital to economic recovery,” said Andy Van Kleunen, Executive Director for National Skills Coalition, which hosted the employers and facilitated the meetings. “We applaud these business leaders for their efforts to build support for public-private partnerships that will enable our education and training institutions to better meet the needs of regional industries and provide new pathways to good jobs.”

The employers met with officials from the White House Domestic Policy Council and Office of Management and Budget as well as Senate committee offices. Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis welcomed the group at the Department of Labor, where they met with Assistant Secretary Jane Oates, Employment and Training Administration.

**Employers ready to hire are stifled by skill gap**

“We have record unemployment and skilled jobs going unfilled. We should never have these two problems at the same time,” said Michael Mandina of Optimax Systems, Inc. in Ontario, New York. “I came to Washington to tell national policymakers that the skill gap is real, it’s keeping people unemployed, making it very difficult for companies like mine to grow and add jobs.”

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Research supports what employers are experiencing on the ground and suggests that the skill gap could be stifling efforts to lower the unemployment rate.

According to a [recent International Monetary Fund study](#), the skills gap is at a historical high in many states, especially in those with large manufacturing sectors. The skills gap accounts for 50 basis points of the increase in unemployment since 2007.

### **Good Policy: Sector Partnerships are a proven strategy for addressing skill gaps**

The employers from twelve states delivered a strong message to policymakers in Washington that Sector Partnerships are a proven strategy in need of federal support.

“Sector Partnerships offer distinct capacity to bring employers together across an industry to figure out their common skill needs and work with education providers, labor, and community organizations to shape training accordingly,” said Jennifer Hermann of UCSF Medical Center in San Francisco, California. “That means my organization can focus on the business of patient care. It means people in my community can train for a job and advance in my organization. It’s that simple.”

A recent, [multi-year study by Public / Private Ventures](#) on the effectiveness of sector-focused training programs found positive outcomes for workers including, steadier employment with increased earnings and better access to benefits.

### **Good Politics: SECTORS Act has bi-partisan support, now is the time to act**

The group of employers called on members of the Administration and Congress to act swiftly in moving the SECTORS Act through the Senate and to build on that momentum to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act.

“The single biggest issue facing our country is jobs. Despite all the talk of political polarization in our country, the House of Representatives passed the SECTORS Act on a unanimous bi-partisan vote,” said Scott Ellsworth of Tipco Punch, Inc. in Hamilton, Ohio. “That’s because this issue of skills rises above politics. It’s something we can all agree on. It’s time for the Senate to rise above partisan politics and do what’s right for America’s business owners and America’s workers.”

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[National Skills Coalition](#) is a broad-based coalition of employers, unions, education and training providers, and public officials working toward a vision of an America that grows its economy by investing in its people so that every worker and every industry has the skills to compete and prosper.

**Employers participating in the two-day fly-in included:** Erick Ajax, E.J. Ajax and Sons, Minneapolis, MN; Richard Berkowitz, Transportation Institute, Seattle, WA; Michael DiMarino, Linda Tool, Brooklyn, NY; Scott Ellsworth, Tipco Punch, Inc., Hamilton, OH; Michael Galiazzo, Regional

*Manufacturing Institute, Sparks Glencoe, MD; Jennifer Hermann, UCSF Medical Center, San Francisco, CA; Paul Hoffman, Orange Research, Inc., Milford, CT; Pamela Lenzion, Marinas International, Dallas, TX; Michael Mandina, Optimax Systems, Inc., Ontario, NY; Carl Moyer, Yahoo, Hillsboro, OR; Diana Parr, Uniloy Milacron, Inc., Tecumseh, MI; James Paulson, Shepard-Interactive, Portland, OR; Douglas Rose, Aero Gear, Inc., Windsor, CT; Gabe Shapiro, Next Step Living, Inc., Boston, MA; Liza Smitherman, Jostin Construction, Inc., Cincinnati, OH; Michael Tamasi, AccuRounds, Avon, MA; Richard Winsman, Kelso Longview Chamber of Commerce, Longview, WA.*

***Partner organizations included:*** *Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology, Greater Cincinnati Workforce Network, Jackson Area Manufacturers Association, JVS Boston, JVS San Francisco, Maine Marine Trades Association, National Fund for Workforce Solutions, SkillWorks, Workforce Development Council of Seattle King County, Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council, Worksystems, Inc.*