



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Promoting and Protecting Opportunity

DOL News Brief

July 24, 2014

[Subscribe](#) | [Send Feedback](#) | [PDF Version](#)



WINNER OF 2014 AVA DIGITAL GOLD AWARD

BY THE NUMBERS

More than
20 million
people
benefit from
federal programs
for
**basic education,
job training &
employment services**
each year

What's New

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Signed into Law

President Obama, U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez, and congressional and workforce leaders came together on July 22 as the president signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act into law. The signing came after the bill's passage in Congress with strong bipartisan majorities in both



houses. The new law marks the first major update to federal job training programs in more than 15 years and will help to streamline and coordinate workforce and adult education programs at the federal, state and local levels. That same day, Vice President Biden released his report, "Ready to Work: Job-Driven Training and American Opportunity," which lays out specific actions the administration is taking to ensure federal investments in skills training are leading people toward good jobs. Many of the principles in the report were incorporated into WIOA, and those principles will serve as the foundation for future job training investments. Perez thanked several thousand stakeholders in the workforce development communities the next day for their work leading to the development of the law and acknowledged the important work ahead to effectively implement it. On July 24, Perez joined Obama on a visit to Los Angeles Trade Technical College to discuss how WIOA will expand the role of community colleges in preparing workers for in-demand jobs.

- [Read the Blog Post](#)
- [Learn About WIOA](#)
- [Learn About Job-Driven Training](#)

Bookstore Owners See Advantages to Raising the Minimum Wage



For Bryan and Christy Wiskeman, owners of Gulliver's Books in Fairbanks, Alaska, the decision to pay their employees above the national minimum wage was a simple one. The Wiskemans recognized that the slightly higher cost up front would pay dividends by lowering worker turnover, reducing

training costs and boosting employee morale. During a trip to Alaska, Secretary Perez, along with Sen. Mark Begich, met with the Wiskemans and their employees on July 19. Perez supported the owners for recognizing that

(Work in Progress) The Best of Our Blog

Each week, this space will bring you the best from our [\(Work in Progress\)](#) blog.

- [One Year](#): Published one year after he raised his right hand for his swearing-in, Secretary Perez recalls some of the moments that have stood out in his travels and his meetings with Americans from so many different walks of life. "From Manchester to Milwaukee to Morgantown and from Syracuse to San Antonio to Seattle, I have heard remarkable stories of strength and resilience," he writes.
- [What 5 Employers Have To Say About the Minimum Wage](#): July 24 marked five years since the last time the federal minimum wage was increased. Secretary Perez introduces readers to five employers who explain why they support raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour.
- [Encouraging Local Partnerships That Help Job Seekers](#): Jennifer Troke, chief of the division of youth services in the Office of Workforce Investment, and Ben Seigel, a senior policy advisor, emphasize the importance of working across agencies to ensure that every door opens a path to success for job seekers and that workers receive the support they need to acquire in-demand skills.

Welcome for New Citizens

At a naturalization ceremony at W.T.



Woodson High School in Fairfax, Va., on July 18, Deputy Secretary Christopher P. Lu delivered remarks

welcoming 475 new Americans. Lu's parents immigrated to the United States as college students, and he drew on their experiences in discussing the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. "Those of us born as U.S. citizens often take for granted what it means to be an American," Lu said. "Even though you are our newest citizens, you can play an important role in challenging how the rest of us view our roles in this democracy. Through your example, you can make the rest of us better citizens." The newly-minted American citizens hail from 69 countries.

Pathways to Economic Stability

The findings of a Financial Industry Regulatory Authority study on the financial capability of American adults reporting a work-related disability were



released at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., on July 23. The report shows that 24 years after the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into law, people with disabilities are less financially stable than people without disabilities. Among the speakers was Assistant Secretary of Labor for Disability Employment Policy Kathy Martinez, who provided her insights on building pathways out of poverty for youth and adults with disabilities. "The results of the survey bring to the forefront the critical issues that both workers with and without disabilities are facing with respect to their financial security," said Martinez. "It reaffirms the need for a federal focus on investing in 'financial capability' models to provide education and support to low-income working individuals and families." The event was sponsored by the National Disability Institute.

• [Read the Report](#)

Enhancing UI Programs



As part of the overall nationwide effort to modernize the technology supporting state Unemployment Insurance programs, the department's Office

of Unemployment Insurance and the National Association for State Workforce Agency's Information Technology Support Center hosted a Cloud Technology Industry Day on July 18. The department recently published a Request For Information for vendors to present innovative models using cloud technology to support state systems. The meeting was designed to engage vendors and share the requirements of the state

higher wages are good for the bottom line, for backing an increase in the national minimum wage to \$10.10, and for championing efforts to increase the state's minimum wage to \$8.25 for all workers. "Business owners all across the country are telling me the same thing," said Perez. "Paying their employees more than the current federal minimum wage is the right thing to do for workers, and also makes good economic sense, as those workers stay on the job longer and have more money to spend on goods and services throughout the economy." Two days later, Perez fired up a crowd of about 100 community leaders at an AFL-CIO minimum wage event in Anchorage. He told the crowd that the utility bill in Alaska isn't a luxury, but rather a necessity, and that's why it's critical to raise the minimum wage in Alaska and elsewhere.

Veterans Deserve 'Gratitude and Respect' — and Jobs

In Alaska, you are more likely to run into a veteran than in any other state. Veterans make up nearly 15 percent of Alaskans 18 and over. That's why Secretary Perez made it a priority to meet with veterans, community leaders and local elected officials to discuss the challenges they face and how the department



can better serve them. In Fairbanks, Perez and Sen. Mark Begich toured the Fairbanks Pipeline Training Center, where veterans learn marketable skills to enter the oil and gas industry in Alaska. Some graduates are well on their way to making \$40 per hour. Perez and Begich presented certificates to Helmets to Hardhats graduates who completed course work and hands-on training in welding. Following the presentation, Perez held a roundtable discussion with veterans and community leaders on how Alaska's unique geography makes for unique challenges in service delivery. Later, he toured the Anchorage Midtown Job Center and met with employers, training providers, the local Chamber of Commerce and community leaders to discuss the value of hiring veterans. Employers large and small expressed their willingness to increase collaboration to hire and better serve transitioning service members. "Those men and women who have served in our nation's armed forces deserve our gratitude and our respect," said Perez. "But more importantly, they deserve our support as they transition back to civilian life." Begich and Alaska Labor Commissioner Dianne Blumer joined in the discussion.

For Students at Alaska Job Corps, the 'Sky is the Limit'



Job Corps will celebrate its 50th birthday on Aug. 20, and Secretary Perez spent part of his trip to The Last Frontier visiting students at the Alaska Job Corps. Perez, accompanied by Sen. Mark Begich, was welcomed by a performance of traditional Alaska Native dance before touring the center's

dormitory and enjoying lunch prepared by the center's culinary arts students. Afterwards, Kathleen Wonhola, a 25-year-old student from a remote fishing village on the Nushagak River, gave a tour of the electrical program facility, where she received training that led to a post-graduation job working with fiber optics in the telecommunications industry. Perez spoke to instructors and employers, who praised Job Corps graduates as knowledgeable and

UI programs and provide an opportunity for questions. Dawn Leaf, deputy chief information officer, and Gay Gilbert, administrator for the unemployment insurance office, participated in the meeting, along with representatives from federal and state agencies. Responses to the RFI are due by Aug. 22.

Inclusion in Charm City

The Baltimore Mayor's Commission on Disabilities helps make "Charm City" a more inclusive community to both live and work.



Assistant Secretary of Labor for Disability Employment Policy Kathy Martinez applauded its efforts on July 23, when the commission gathered to celebrate recent accomplishments and discuss future priorities. "Diversity isn't only about race or ethnicity. It's about people from all walks of life living, learning and working together," Martinez said to a crowd that included people with disabilities, Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake and city staff. "It certainly includes people with disabilities. So your work to make Baltimore a more accessible community adds to its charm, to those of us with disabilities and all people."

- [Learn About Employment First](#)

Focusing on Disability Employment

Union representatives in the department gathered in New Orleans on July 17 to hear Assistant Secretary of Labor for Disability Employment Policy Kathy Martinez discuss key issues impacting disability employment in the public and private sectors. "As a key part of [the department] and its workforce, I hope that all of you share my vision of a workplace culture revolutionized by today's realities," said Martinez, who discussed the changing face of disability and the importance of fostering disability-friendly workplaces. Her remarks were followed by a presentation on disability employment basics by the Job Accommodation Network's Lou Orslene. Their appearance was part of the National Council of Field Labor Locals Leadership Conference, an annual gathering.

- [Learn About JAN](#)

Annual Report on USERRA

Each year, Congress asks the Veterans' Employment and Training Service to report on its activities under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, which protects service

reliable workers. "The fact that you found Job Corps and you are at Job Corps tells me you want to have a productive life," Perez told the assembled students before departing. "We all believe in you. Put these skills to work, and the sky is the limit."

- [Read the Blog Post](#)
- [View the Slideshow](#)

National News

President Signs Executive Order on LGBT Workplace Protections

Anti-discrimination law got an update on July 21, as President Obama signed an executive order extending workplace protections to LGBT employees of federal contractors and of the federal government. Before the signing, which was attended by Deputy Secretary of Labor



Christopher P. Lu and Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs Director Patricia Shiu, the president remarked that, "in too many states and in too many workplaces, simply being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender can still be a fireable offense." He encouraged Congress to consider legislation that would cover all workers. Obama also pointed out that workplace equality is simply good business. Noting that most of the Fortune 500 companies already have nondiscrimination policies on their books, he explained that these policies help companies attract and retain the best talent.

- [Read the Blog Post](#)
- [View the Signing Ceremony](#)
- [Learn More About the Executive Order](#)

Grants to Support Indian and Native American Job Opportunities



Secretary Perez's trip to Alaska included a visit to the Cook Inlet Tribal Council on July 21, where he met with tribal community leaders who are using federal funds to expand employment and training opportunities for local residents. During the visit, Perez met with students participating in CITC's Fab Lab,

a high-tech facility that includes a state-of-the-art 3-D printer. Funding for these training opportunities, awarded through the department's Division of Indian and Native American Programs, assists more than 12,000 individuals through education and skills training. The Cook Inlet program is just one of the nearly 180 tribal organizations that are sharing \$58 million to help expand the employment and training opportunities in their communities. The funding is used to develop programs to improve the academic, occupational and literacy skills of Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian adults and youth, making them more competitive in the workforce.

- [Read the Blog Post](#)

International Scene

ILAB in Australia for G20 Task Force on Employment



members' civilian jobs while they perform military service, and prohibits employment discrimination based in any part on an individual's past, present or intended uniformed service. The report, sent on July 21, states that VETS reviewed 1,328 unique USERRA complaint cases in Fiscal Year 2013, and briefed more than 47,000 individuals on their job rights under USERRA.

- [Read the Report](#)

ERISA Council to Meet

The Advisory Council on Employee Welfare and Pension Benefit Plans, known as the ERISA Advisory Council, will hold a public meeting Aug. 19 through Aug. 21. Council members will hear testimony from invited witnesses and receive an update from the Employee Benefits Security Administration. Organizations or members of the public who wish to address the council or submit a statement should email their requests by Aug. 12 to the council's executive secretary, Larry Good, at good.larry@dol.gov, or call 202-693-8668.

- [Read the News Release](#)

'Day of Action' Round-Up



Supporters of a higher minimum wage took to Twitter during the July 24 Minimum Wage Day of Action, which marked the 5-year anniversary of the last

federal minimum wage increase. Using the hashtags #5Reasons and #1010Now, community leaders, activists, elected officials and everyday Americans highlighted five major reasons why it's time to raise the minimum wage.

- [View the Day of Action Page](#)
- [Read About the Minimum Wage](#)

Play Ball!

Secretary Perez had the honor of throwing out the ceremonial first pitch July 18 for a game between the Washington Nationals and the Milwaukee Brewers. Despite the home team loss, Perez, who wore his Nats cap and jersey, said he had



The G20 Task Force on Employment, meeting in Brisbane, Australia, from July 22-24, discussed the preparation of employment plans by each member of the G20 and the relationships between these countries' employment strategies and their larger growth strategies. It also addressed



female participation in the workplace, a G20 initiative to promote and strengthen safety and health in the workplace, and strategies for addressing underemployment and informal employment. Mark Mittelhauser, associate deputy undersecretary of labor at the Bureau of International Labor Affairs, represented the United States at the meeting and co-chaired the session on safer workplaces. "G20 countries have a tremendous opportunity to take meaningful, coordinated steps in reducing the number of workers who die and suffer injuries and occupational illnesses each day," he said. "These global efforts contribute to economic growth." The task force also began negotiations on a declaration that will be issued by the G20 Labor and Employment Ministers, who will meet in Melbourne, Australia, on Sept. 10 and 11.

- [Learn About the 2014 G20](#)

It Happened on the Hill

Hearing Highlights Black Lung Claimants' Challenges



The department is committed to improving the effectiveness of its black lung program and is eager to work with Congress to enact legislation that protects miners from unethical medical and legal practices, Deputy Secretary of Labor Christopher P. Lu and Solicitor M. Patricia Smith testified at a Senate hearing on

July 22. Challenges faced by claimants was the focus of the hearing held by the Senate Subcommittee on Workplace Safety and Health, chaired by Sen. Bob Casey of Pennsylvania. As part of an effort to address a backlog of black lung cases, the department plans to hire additional judges in its Pittsburgh office and has asked for a \$2.72 million increase in funding for the Office of Administrative Law Judges, which oversees claims and appeals.

- [Read the Testimony](#)

DOL Working for You

Job Corps Provides Foundation for Military Service... and Life Jefferson Smithery always dreamed of

a great time. The secretary practiced for his big night at the park earlier in the week, tossing the baseball to Deputy Secretary of Labor Chris Lu.

Weekly UI Claims

The department reported that the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial Unemployment Insurance claims was 284,000 for the week ending July 19, a decrease of 19,000 from the previous week's revised level. The four-week moving average was 302,000, down 7,250 from the previous week's revised average.

- [Read the News Release](#)

Upcoming Deadlines & Events

[Open Funding Opportunities](#)

EBSA — Getting It Right: Know Your Fiduciary Responsibilities Seminar

- [July 31 — Madison, WI](#)

EBSA — Health Benefits Laws Compliance Assistance Seminar

- [August 5 — Santa Fe, NM](#)

OFCCP — AAP: Creating an Inclusive Workforce

- [August 7 — Houston, TX](#)

OFCCP — Creating an Inclusive Workforce

- [August 7 — Omaha, NE](#)

OFCCP — Directive 306: Joint Event with the Cara Program

- [August 14 — Chicago, IL](#)

OFCCP — EXCEL: Examining Conflicts in Employment Laws

- [August 12 — San Diego, CA](#)
- [August 13 — San Diego, CA](#)
- [August 14 — San Diego, CA](#)

OFCCP — Training with the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind

- [July 29 — Boston, MA](#)

OFCCP — Understanding the Nuts and Bolts of a Construction Audit

- [August 24 — Houston, TX](#)

OFCCP — What to Expect During an OFCCP Audit

- [July 25 — Chicago, IL](#)

OLMS — Compliance Assistance Seminar

enlisting in the U.S. Army. A forward-thinker, he realized early on that before joining the military he wanted to learn a trade that would serve him well in his post-military life. The Baltimore native's planning led him to Red Rock Job Corps Center in Lopez, Pa., where he enrolled in the brick masonry program in April 2012. While at Job Corps, Jefferson learned much more than just how to become a skilled brick mason. "The importance of



respecting yourself and others, giving your all in everything you do, and completing tasks thoroughly and punctually are some of the core values forever instilled in me," he said. After graduating from Red Rock in April 2013, he fulfilled his life-long dream and enlisted in the Army. Now a Private First Class Infantryman stationed at Fort Drum, N.Y., Smithery believes that the fundamental values he learned in Job Corps give him an anchor for meeting the challenges of military service. He credits Job Corps with teaching him not only professional skills, but life skills.

DOL in Action

Overloaded Storage Bins Caused Deadly Accident at Nebraska Plant

The structural collapse of International Nutrition Inc.'s Omaha-facility in January was caused by overloading nine storage bins on the building's roof level, an investigation by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration has found. The collapse at the livestock feed supplement manufacturer caused the death of two workers and injuries to nine others. OSHA has cited the company with one willful, one repeat and 11 additional safety violations. The company also has been placed in the Severe Violator Enforcement Program. OSHA conducted its investigation in cooperation with several other governmental agencies and companies.

- [Read the News Release](#)

Home Improvement Chain 'Failed to Create Culture of Safety'

Home improvement chain Lowe's Cos. Inc. has been cited by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration for exposing workers to electrical hazards and failing to provide information on respiratory protection to employees at its Zanesville, Ohio, store. OSHA initiated the inspection in March after the store reported a higher-than-average injury rate. Proposed penalties total \$53,240. "Lowe's has a responsibility to train its managers and workers nationwide to maintain safe working conditions," said Deborah Zubaty, OSHA's area director in Columbus. "In this case, multiple stores across the country have been cited for similar hazards, but the chain has failed to address them at all locations and create a culture of safety for all workers."

- [Read the News Release](#)

Additional Funding Awarded to Arkansas for Storm Cleanup

The department awarded Arkansas an additional \$1,013,495 on July 23 to assist the state's on-going cleanup and recovery efforts following severe storms last December. The funding will be used to extend the employment of eligible individuals in the affected areas. "Today's summer temperatures make the severe storms of the winter season hard to remember," said Secretary Perez. "But the work to recover from those severe storms continues and the federal funds we're awarding today will assist the state with completing this work."

- [Read the News Release](#)

Forever 21 Faulted for Continued Safety Hazards

- [July 25 — Tampa, FL](#)
- [August 5 — Nashville, TN](#)

OSHA — Federal Agency Training Week

- [July 29 — Arlington Heights, IL](#)
- [July 30 — Arlington Heights, IL](#)
- [July 31 — Arlington Heights, IL](#)

OLMS — National Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health Temporary Workers Workgroup Meeting

- [July 28 — Washington, DC](#)

OSHA — Stakeholder Meeting to Consider Proposed Standard to Protect Safety, Health of Emergency Responders

- [July 30 — Washington, DC](#)

WHD — Emphasis on wage requirements for workers under Section 14(c) of the FLSA

- [July 29 — St. Louis, MO](#)
- [July 31 — Phoenix, AZ](#)
- [August 5 — Columbia, SC](#)

Popular fashion retail store Forever 21 has been fined \$158,000 by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration for exposing employees to serious safety hazards at its store in Wayne, N.J. The citations mark the third time the retailer was cited for safety violations in less than seven months at three separate locations. OSHA's inspection found boxes filled with merchandise in front of electrical boxes, failure to store material in a way that prevented sliding or collapse, and failure to provide a cover for fluorescent lights that would prevent contact or breakage.

- [Read the News Release](#)

United Airlines Faces \$101,000 in Fines

United Airlines Inc. has exposed ground operation workers at the Newark, N.J., Liberty International Airport to hazardous conditions, prompting the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to issue 16 citations and propose penalties of \$101,300. The safety violations were found during a January inspection that is part of an OSHA effort to focus on workplaces with high rates of injuries and illness. The inspection found three repeat violations that had initially been discovered during inspections in 2011 and 2013. The company also was cited for fall and struck-by hazards, unguarded equipment, and unclean and disorderly work areas.

- [Read the News Release](#)

Missouri Union to Hold New Election

The officers of American Federation of Government Employees Local 96 in St. Louis, Mo., have agreed to conduct a new election for the offices of president and first vice president for professionals under the supervision of the Office of Labor-Management Standards. These two offices were contested in the union's December 2013 election. An OLMS investigation revealed that members were denied the right to vote when no effort was made to find correct addresses for election materials, including ballots that were mailed and returned as undeliverable. Additionally, a union newsletter contained articles from incumbent officers highlighting their accomplishments, one of which was reprinted in campaign literature. The new election will be held by Oct. 17.

Construction Spike in Montana Prompts Concern About Fall Hazards

Following a major hailstorm in Billings, Mont., in May and a resulting spike in construction, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration is calling on employers, workers and consumers to protect roofing and construction workers against fall hazards. The Weekend Work Initiative aims to increase workplace surveillance of construction fall hazards and other dangers to prevent employee injuries and fatalities. Fall hazards are the leading cause of injuries and fatalities in the construction industry, and construction activity has peaked because of the hailstorm. OSHA's Billings Area Office has extended its enforcement activities to include weekends, so that fall hazard inspections can be conducted during days of frequent construction.

- [Read the News Release](#)

Virginia Coal Mine Failed to Control Accumulations of Dust

During a recent impact inspection at the Dickenson-Russell Coal Co., LLC's Cherokee Mine in Dickenson County, Va., enforcement personnel from the Mine Safety and Health Administration issued 25 citations and five unwarrantable failure orders. Among the conditions found were the accumulation of combustible materials in the form of black and dry float coal dust along one of the mine's conveyer belts. A buildup of coal dust places miners at serious risk to explosions.

- [Read the News Release](#)

Follow @USDOL on



Tweets Follow

US Labor Department 48m
@USDOL

How we're expanding opportunity for tribal communities -->
social.dol.gov/blog/?p=13773
[#OpportunityForAll](#)

Expand

US Labor Department 1h
@USDOL

Thanks to everyone who joined the minimum wage Day of Action. Check out these highlights from today:
[#1010Now](http://storify.com/usdol/minimum-...)

U.S. Department of Labor, Frances Perkins Building, 200 Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20210
www.dol.gov | Telephone: 1-866-4-USA-DOL (1-866-487-2365) | [TTY](#) | [Contact Us](#)