

introduction

This report examines workers, workplaces, and challenges for the future. At the center of *futurework* are the constants in workers' lives and how they intersect with the expected changes in the twenty-first century workforce and workplaces.

American workers need to have economic security over their lifetimes, be able to balance work and family, and have safe and fair workplaces. The ability to meet these needs will, in large part, be shaped by the changes in the workforce and workplaces of today and tomorrow. In the new economy, workers are concerned about being skilled and not stuck. Work arrangements, be they traditional or nontraditional, need to meet the demands of home as well as work. And to be competitive, employers will need to embrace all American workers, those of different races and origins, as well as workers with disabilities. The new millennium promises opportunities but also creates risk.

The first few chapters discuss the future of the workforce, examining: demographic trends; changes in wages and benefits; the relationship between higher wages and higher skills; the pay gaps between women and men, among African Americans, Hispanics, and whites, and between people with disabilities and those without; the effect of unions on wages, benefits, and working conditions; and the evolving work and family balance issues.

Later chapters focus on the future of the workplace, covering: changes in the relative importance of different sectors of the economy; changes in workplace conditions, including safety, health, and discrimination; and the effect of technology and globalization on the ways people work as well as the impact these changes have had on the skill requirements of the workforce.

The final chapters examine the cross cutting themes of the workforce and workplace, looking at rising skill requirements, flexibility in the workplace, and job security. The report concludes with questions and observations.

This volume could not have been produced without the work of staff across the Department of Labor. Contributors included: Sam Afridi, Barbara Bingham, Elena Carr, Mario Distasio, Ray Donnelly, Roland Droitsch, Carl Fillichio, Hank Guzda, Joe Hight, Meg Ingold, Jim Jones, Lynn Kinzer, Judd MacLaury, Sondra Nixon, Gary Reed, Ruth Samardick, Fred Siskind, Sue Smock, Lisa Stuart, Jessica Tucker-Mohl, John Turner, and Suzanne Windle.

Special thanks goes to Kate Dorrell for her extensive editing, Paul Hyland and his staff for producing the *futurework* Internet pages, and Dever Designs for their publication design. Additionally, many reviewers lent their expertise to this project and their assistance is greatly appreciated.

Particular mention is also due to Susan Green, Seth Harris, Harry Holzer, Edward Montgomery, and Bill Parks, for their guidance throughout the production of this volume.