



[Roundtable on How to Expand Apprenticeships to Help More Workers](#)

U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and the Workforce Committee Democrats

Several Committee Democrats of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and the Workforce met in a roundtable on Wednesday, Nov. 15 to hear from business professionals across a variety of industries their advice on apprenticeship programs. Stakeholders spoke to how apprenticeship programs can be better facilitated, funded, and supported by Congress.

Moderator

- **Angela Hanks:** Associate Director of Workforce Development Policy, Center for American Progress

Witnesses:

- **Ranking Member Bobby Scott (D-VA)**
- **Congresswoman Susan Davis (D-CA)**
- **Congresswoman Kathleen Rice (D-NY)**
- **Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR)**
- **Congressman Salud Carbajal (D-CA)**
- **Congressman Donald Norcross (D-NJ)**
- **Dr. Thomas Kriger:** Research Director, North America's Building Trades Unions
- **Katie Spiker:** Senior Federal Policy Analyst, National Skills Coalition
- **Portia Wu:** Director of Workforce Policy, Microsoft
- **Kate Viar:** Director, Amazon Public Policy
- **Daniel Bustillo:** Director, Healthcare Career Advancement Program (H-CAP)

Opening Statements:

Ranking Member Bobby Scott (D-VA)

- The Ranking Member said he would be introducing a resolution honoring apprenticeship week. He also pointed out H.R.2933, the Leveraging Effective Apprenticeships to Rebuild National Skills Act or the LEARNS Act.
- The Ranking Member called for a coherent basis for funding decisions for apprenticeships.
- He added that good apprenticeship programs across the country need to be scaled.

Tom Kriger

- Dr. Kriger explained that building trades have made commitments to increased diversity in the apprenticeship pool.
- Dr. Kriger spoke to the success of apprenticeships in North America's Building Trade Unions, and most apprentices are women of color.

Katie Spiker

- Ms. Spiker explained that National Skills Coalition works with community colleges across the D.C. area.
- She hears three big barriers from partners:
 - Expand apprenticeships to small and medium-sized businesses
 - Expand the pipeline to provide support for individuals once they have a job.
 - Expand support to local businesses.

Portia Wu

- Ms. Wu stated that their apprenticeship model in the UK was very successful. She spoke to her hope to scaling the apprenticeship program in the United States.
- Ms. Wu explained that apprenticeship programs during the Obama administration worked to coordinate with community colleges and small businesses. She hopes the Trump administration will continue these policies.

Kate Viar

- Ms. Viar works in veteran's issues and policy at Amazon. She explained that they partnered with the Department of Labor to work on a veteran's apprenticeship program.
- Ms. Viar added that Amazon actively seeks out veterans and military spouses for employment.
- She stated that the results of their apprenticeship program have been successful so far, and that they are looking to scale the size and number of programs, as well as the eligible demographics.

Daniel Bustillo

- Mr. Bustillo stated that there are growing jobs in healthcare.
- He explained that registered apprenticeships are a solution to lack of jobs.

Congresswoman Kathleen Rice (D-NY)

- The Congresswoman explained her interest in finding ways to increase apprenticeships across the country.

Congresswoman Susan Davis (D-CA)

- The Congresswoman shared that apprenticeships have been a compelling issue for her.
- She stated that the apprenticeship program is an important part of the economy and the community. Even so, she added that the United States is falling behind in this area.
- The Congresswoman noted that programs should be rigorous and prestigious.

Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR)

- The Congresswoman explained her interest in learning what the barriers are in doing apprenticeship programs.

Congressman Salud Carbajal (D-CA)

- The Congressman asked for expansion of apprenticeships.

Congressman Donald Norcross (D-NJ)

- The Congressman explained that he did four years as an electrical apprentice.
- He added that core competencies across the country help to prepare apprentices.
- The Congressman explained that college is not a good option for everyone, but it has to work for the individual.

Q & A

Angela Hanks

- Can you talk a little about how apprenticeships have affected the American economy?
 - Dr. Kriger: We've been around for 100 years, and 2/3 of all apprenticeships are in construction. They are not really union programs; it is based on joint labor cooperation over the years. All the apprenticeships are run by a committee. The curriculum is typically driven by the employers. The only reason apprenticeships are going to work in other industries is if apprentices are highly trained and work well. You have these deep and widespread employer engagements which spreads the risk and the cost. One thing we have to think of are instructor-training programs and a nationwide curriculum with national standards for instructors. These trainings have to be frequently updated. We are the only industry that offers free training.
- You work in the healthcare industry, which is considered an emerging industry and female-dominated for apprenticeships. Can you talk about what the elements are to move into this sector?
 - Mr. Bustillo: When we start to think about where there are the largest jobs is with homecare. I do think, from a broader equity perspective, that there are individuals who are pushed into the lower levels of professional work. Providing real pathways and pipelines is critically important.
- This work that Amazon is doing with veteran apprenticeship programs is based on the company's commitment to hire veterans. Can you explain that?
 - Ms. Viar: Apprenticeships become a pipeline to hire veterans. There is a skills gap. Veterans who separate from the military, and maybe even had technical skills, still might need 6 to 8 months of training to get to where they need to be technically. Amazon has been trying to have conversations with higher education institutions to see what students are being taught, and what needs to be done. We can't hire quickly enough for Amazon. We are doing this to create the talent pool. For us, it's really a common sense thing to do. We hope this will help us with our technical gap.
 - Ms. Wu: I think our experience is pretty similar to Amazon's. We want to broaden and diversify our talent pool. We need people to become life-long learners. We need to have training and teaching levels evolve. We have already seen a great deal of progress with this in the UK. We want that growth in our communities, because it broadens the talent pipeline for everyone.
- Where do apprenticeships fit in our larger workforce development system?
 - Ms. Spiker: The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was passed in 2014. It continued the idea that apprenticeships and other forms of work-based

learning of how we connect with those to hire. Because apprenticeship requires a sponsor and support, it helps us to work on developing this area.

- There are a lot of equity issues here. What are key policy barriers you face?
 - Mr. Bustillo: Homecare and nursing are two areas where there are policy and licensing issues. We need to continue to do that work. There are a lot of small and medium-sized employers in healthcare. There are strategies around that, which are very important to scaling in healthcare.
 - Ms. Viar: I think there are some challenges with the existing law that needs to be addressed. From what I understand, we have veterans who try to qualify under WIOA, and there are obstacles that don't make sense. Another thing I will say is that this is very expensive to do as an employer. The cost of bringing in an employee is much higher under the apprenticeship program. One way to cut down the costs is to cut down bureaucracy. Our recommendation would be to simplify while still providing the resources to navigate this.
 - Ms. Wu: The challenge is having consistency structure to administer this program. We also need to be flexible in order for managers to tailor this program to their needs. A lack of funding and support limits the capacity of programs. Employers are not always willing to make this investment.

Ranking Member Bobby Scott (D-VA)

- What we understand are the registered apprenticeships are too hard to figure out, and it would be easier if employers created their own. Can someone comment on if we can support apprenticeships?
 - Dr. Kriger: We believe that our apprenticeships have been around so long, because of the quality of the programs. When employers hire apprentices, they know they can do the work well.
- How are you sure you have high standards in a program?
 - Dr. Kriger: There are registration requirements that you should have certain things. There should be a certifiable instructor training program.
- Can you get that certification done simply?
 - Dr. Kriger: It takes work, but we think it is worth it to do that.
 - Ms. Wu: Tech industries are national and international agencies. We think registration is an option that works for us, but not the only option. In the UK, standards are flexible, but also clear and rigorous. You need some institutions that will be there to carry this forward.
 - Ms. Viar: For Amazon, there needs to be flexibility. We can't hire quickly enough for our open positions. We need to work on what our standards should be by coordinating with higher education institutions. There do have to be some standards so that an apprentice can go from one business to another.
 - Ms. Spiker: For small and medium size businesses, we hear from our partners that intermediaries are valuable to save time for businesses in recruitment.
 - Mr. Bustillo: In healthcare, this is important too. We are training for the 4 million new jobs we expect in this sector by 2026.

Congressman Donald Norcross (D-NJ)

- How are you able to create incentive programs to keep businesses in?

- Ms. Spiker: There are a number of bills right now that would create tax incentives and tax credits. We are working on something that would expand these credits.
- Ms. Wu: I think an area where the Department of Labor has been very important is by funding intermediaries.
- Mr. Bustillo: There are a lot of for-profit areas of healthcare. For us, long-term sustainability is important.

Congresswoman Kathleen Rice (D-NY)

- Can you talk about how you broadened your apprenticeship in the UK, Portia?
 - Ms. Wu: It is possible to grow really quickly with apprenticeships. One thing we see is the interaction between consistency and standards. We learned that there has to be a tie to employment outcomes. Being able to have input from communities and labor is important to us.
- In Colorado, I know that Governor Hickenlooper is doing a lot to get high school students into the apprenticeship pathway. They are dealing with how to get students to do apprenticeships instead of or with college.
 - Dr. Kriger: That's really a matter of uplifting apprenticeships in general. I think when young people think of construction, there is a negative attitude to physical work, which is only just a part of it. I think that is a much different conversation and outlook on vocational education and skilled trades in Europe.
 - Ms. Spiker: This is a question of how we engage young people in schools, and individuals outside of schools. As localities are implementing funding, WIOA can open up more ways to get young people involved with internships.
 - Mr. Bustillo: I am looking forward to seeing how Colorado continues this area in healthcare, because there are things that youth cannot do in the healthcare setting. Another thing we want to consider is that these apprenticeships are not the end-game; they are only entry level opportunities. We need to open up more pathways.
 - Ms. Viar: It is unclear whether training can directly lead to a job at Amazon. We have very strict criteria in our apprenticeship programs. Young people need to learn that they don't need a college degree for a well-paid job that they enjoy. The idea that a four-year degree is required to have a career is false.
 - Dr. Kriger: It is a hard sell to parents that their children do not need to go to college. We need to start recognizing apprenticeships as a four-year degree and add higher education credits to that. We have the deepest relationships with community colleges.

Congresswoman Susan Davis (D-CA)

- We need to think about how we make a curriculum for these internship programs. If you were to try to convince business people out there that this is a good idea, would you recommend they follow a structure or create their own structure.
 - Ms. Wu: Each country going out there and creating their own is something only businesses like Microsoft and Amazon can do. It is very labor intensive to go through the apprentice hiring process.

- We know a number of industries have started apprenticeship programs, but not all have. What can kick-start that change? What do you see that could perhaps be helpful in terms of understanding compensation and stipends?
 - Dr. Kriger: In the construction industry, there is very little research surrounding return on investment. Some original research on construction would be helpful. We are an aging industry, and we could lose a lot of construction workers in the next several years.
 - Mr. Bustillo: Ultimately, we need to make the case that we should build on infrastructure that already exists. There's a lot of evidence to be collected there on the efficacy of the model.
 - Ms. Wu: Another thing we need to think about is what takes place in deciding what credentials matter.

Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR)

- Part of this is a responsibility we have to tell students that there are more options after high school than just college. The bipartisan bill I sponsored would address this intermediary issue.
 - Ms. Spiker: One of the strengths of your bill is that it works closely with labor.
 - Mr. Bustillo: Particularly the healthcare workforce is making pathways once individuals are in the profession, rather than crowding individuals at entry level positions.
- How can a computer science degree not be enough?
 - Ms. Wu: The curriculums are out of date.
 - Ms. Viar: Many do not meet the technical bar. It is about creating building blocks to put in place so that the college curriculum can prepare for jobs that will exist in the future, rather than the jobs that exist now.
 - Ms. Hanks: There are opportunities to bring more apprenticeships in.