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**Education - Adult Education**

**CLOSING THE SKILLS GAP:  
PRESIDENT CLINTON'S ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY,  
RE-EMPLOYMENT, AND YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES**

*January 28, 1999*

Today, President Clinton Announces A \$965 Million Three-Part Initiative To Close America's Skills Gap. Last year, President Clinton signed the Workforce Investment Act transforming the job training system by streamlining services and empowering workers with a simple skills grant so that they can choose the training they need. However, more work needs to be done because America still faces a skills gap. Today, President Clinton is announcing that his FY2000 budget includes a \$965 million three-part initiative to address the skills gap.

**The President's Budget Includes a Comprehensive Package to Help Us Educate and Train American Workers to Fill the Jobs of the 21st Century.** This comprehensive strategy includes:

1. ***A \$190 Million Increase for Adult Education And Family Literacy Initiative.*** Today, 44 million adults struggle with a job application, cannot read to their children, or cannot fully participate in our economic and civic life because they lack basic skills or English proficiency. The President's initiative:
  - \$95 million -- or 25 percent -- more for adult education grants and challenges state and local governments to join with us to raise program quality.
  - \$70 million for an English literacy/civics initiative;
  - \$20 million to help develop technology for adult learners;
  - New 10% tax credit to employers who establish certain workplace literacy programs; and
  - New initiative to mobilize state and local communities to implement strategies to promote adult education and lifelong learning.
  
2. ***A \$368 Million Increase for Universal Re-employment Initiative.*** The President's FY2000 budget makes a five-year commitment to our Nation's reformed job training system. Specifically, President Clinton proposes to put us on a path that ensures that within five years:
  - All displaced workers will receive the job training they want and need -- after nearly tripling funding for dislocated workers since 1993, initiative makes first-year commitment of additional \$190 million;
  - All people who lose their jobs due to no fault of their own will get the re-employment services -- e.g., job search assistance -- they need; and
  - All Americans will have access to One-Stop Career Centers, including a nationwide toll-free telephone system so that *all* workers will be able to find out what services are available and where they can go to receive them; job search information at 4,000 Community-Based Organizations; 100 mobile One-Stop Career Centers; and increased access for the disabled and the blind.
  
3. ***A \$405 Million Increase for Youth Employment Initiative.*** The unemployment rate among African American teens is *6.5 times* higher than the national average. In addition to an increase in JobCorps and the \$250 million for the new Youth Opportunity Areas, the initiative includes:
  - 75-percent increase in YouthBuild, from \$42.5 million to \$75 million.
  - New \$100 million "Right-Track" Partnership initiative to help lower drop-out rates;
  - Doubles the funding for GEAR UP -- which helps mentor children and prepare them for college -- from \$120 million to \$240 million;
  - New \$50 million initiative to help link Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities (EZ/ECs) to their broader metropolitan regional economies in order to increase the employment of disadvantaged youth; and
  - \$65 million more to prepare disadvantaged youth for success in college, including \$30 million increase in outreach, counseling, and educational support through TRIO program, and new \$35 million initiative to help disadvantaged students stay in college.

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**Today, President Clinton Announces A \$965 Million Three-Part Initiative To Close America's Skills Gap.** In *Putting People First*, candidates Bill Clinton and Al Gore outlined a vision for lifelong learning, stating that workers should be "able to choose advanced skills training, the chance to earn a high school diploma, or the opportunity to learn to read. And we will streamline the confusing array of publicly funded training programs." Last year, President Clinton signed the Workforce Investment Act transforming the job training system by streamlining services and empowering workers with a simple skills grant so that they can choose the training they need. However, more work needs to be done. Today, President Clinton is announcing that his FY2000 budget includes a \$965 million three-part initiative to address the skills gap:

- (1) *A \$190 Million Increase for Adult Education And Family Literacy Initiative;*
- (2) *A \$368 Million Increase for Universal Re-employment Initiative; and*
- (3) *A \$405 Million Increase for Youth Employment Initiative.*

**America Faces A Skills Gap.** The evidence of a skills gap in America is pervasive. On average, employers report that one out of every five of their workers is not fully proficient in his or her job. In manufacturing, 88 percent of companies are having trouble finding qualified applicants for at least one job function. And according to one recent survey, more than 60 percent of corporate leaders say that the number one barrier to sustained economic growth is the lack of a skilled workforce. More than half -- 56 percent -- of establishments report that restructuring and the introduction of new technology has increased the skill requirements for non-managerial employees.

**The President's Budget Includes a Comprehensive Package to Help Us Educate and Train American Workers to Fill the Jobs of the 21st Century.** This comprehensive strategy has three parts:

1. **An Adult Education and Family Literacy Initiative.** Today, 44 million adults struggle with a job application, cannot read to their children, or cannot fully participate in our economic and civic life because they lack basic skills or English proficiency. Many have a learning disability and are not aware of it. Often, they do not know where to get help, are embarrassed to seek it, or cannot seek it because of family responsibilities. Others are immigrants who face long waiting lists in many places where they seek English-language instruction. For some individuals, these low basic skills present a challenge in moving off welfare and succeeding in the workforce.

The goal of the Adult Literacy initiative is to bring Presidential leadership and focus to a

pressing national problem by demanding improvements in the quality of adult basic education programs and increasing funding to help States both meet the new quality goals and serve more people. This initiative includes:

- **\$95 Million Increase -- to \$468 Million -- to Expand Adult Education State Grants and Challenge State and Local Governments to Join Us in Dramatically Increasing Program Quality.** By the year 2005 the President's goal is for the Nation as a whole to: Increase the number of full-time teachers by 20%; Double the number of instructional hours per student; Triple the number of computer stations available at adult education centers; and more than double the amount of child care and counseling services offered in Federal, State, and local adult education programs.
  - **\$70 Million for an English Literacy/Civics Initiative.** This initiative provides competitive grants to States and communities for expanded access to high quality English language instruction linked to practical instruction in civics and life skills including how to navigate the workplace, public education system, and other essentials.
  - **\$23 Million for "America Learns Technology."** One of the important keys to higher quality adult education is effective use of advanced technology. This initiative will increase access to technology for adult learners by supporting high quality software, pilot projects in 40 communities, and advanced research and development.
  - **\$2 Million for a "High Skills Communities" Campaign.** The President's campaign will mobilize States and local communities to implement strategies to promote adult education and lifelong learning. Part of this initiative will provide up to 10 communities \$50,000 awards annually for achieving concrete results so that other communities know what works and what doesn't work.
  - **10% Workplace Education Tax Credit.** Employers who provide certain workplace literacy, English language instruction, and basic education programs will be allowed a 10 percent income tax credit for eligible educational expenses, with a maximum credit of \$525 per participating employee per year.
2. **A Universal Re-Employment Initiative.** The President's FY2000 budget makes a five-year commitment to our Nation's reformed job training system. Specifically, President Clinton proposes to put us on a path that ensures that within five years (1) all displaced workers will receive the job training they want and need; (2) all people who lose their jobs due to no fault of their own will get the re-employment services they need; and (3) all Americans will have access to One-Stop Career Centers. This initiative includes:
- **\$190 Million Increase In Dislocated Worker Program to Put Us On Track To Ensure Every Dislocated Worker Gets The Training They Need.** Since 1993,

dislocated worker funding has been expanded by 171 percent -- helping to serve 689,100 this year, well more than double the 306,300 workers served in 1993. The President's FY2000 budget increases funding for the dislocated worker program by \$190 million -- helping to serve an additional 169,400 workers this year. This would put us on path to ensuring *every* dislocated worker can get the job training he or she needs.

- **Expansion of Employment Service To Put Us on Path To Ensure Every Person Who Loses Their Job Due to No Fault of Their Own Gets the Re-Employment Services They Need.** Today, many workers do not get the job search assistance or other types of re-employment services they need. Therefore, the President's FY2000 budget expands the budget of the Employment Service (ES) to put us on a path to serve within five years the 1.4 million people who lost their job due to no fault of their own *and* do not receive the re-employment services they need.
- **Providing Every American Access To One-Stop Career Centers -- Helping Americans Informed Decisions About Their Futures.** As part of the Workforce Investment Act, every area of the country will have a One-Stop Career Center. Now, we must ensure every American has access to the information available at the One-Stops. The President's budget does just that -- providing \$65 million to take the following steps:
  - First, the President's budget will put in place a system so that the unemployed get job leads the moment they apply for Unemployment Insurance -- transforming our unemployment system into a re-employment system.
  - Second, the plan will create a nationwide toll-free telephone system so that *all* workers will be able to find out what services are available and where they can go to receive them. Every American will have universal access to the services and programs available through One-Stop Career Centers.
  - Third, the plan will ensure that workers will be able to get job search information at 4,000 Community-Based Organizations.
  - Fourth, the plan will create 100 new mobile One-Stop Career Centers -- designed to bring the information and services to rural residents and help the Labor Department's existing rapid response teams provide workers the information they need to get back to work.
  - Fifth, the plan will include funds to help the disabled and the blind benefit from One-Stop Career Centers, including a talking America's Job Bank (AJB), which will be developed in conjunction with the National Federation for the Blind.

3. **Disadvantaged Youth Initiatives.** Dealing with the problems of at-risk youth is one of the major challenges facing the Nation. In December 1998, the national unemployment

rate was just 4.3 percent -- the lowest peacetime level in 41 years. However, while the unemployment rate among African-American teens (aged 16-19) also reached its lowest peacetime level in four decades, it was still *6.5 times* higher than the national average and much higher than the rate for white youth. The goal of the youth employment initiative is to fund promising approaches to increase the educational attainment and employment rates of disadvantaged youth. In addition to an increase in JobCorps and another \$250 million investment in Youth Opportunity Areas, this initiative includes:

- **YouthBuild Expanded by More than 75 Percent.** The FY2000 budget expands YouthBuild by \$32.5 million -- more than 75 percent. This means that we will provide \$75 million for the YouthBuild program that provides disadvantaged young adults with education and employment skills by rehabilitating and building housing for low-income and homeless people.
- **New \$100 Million "Right-Track" Partnership To Reduce Drop-Out Rate.** The President's balanced budget provides \$100 million for "Right Track Partnerships" to promote partnerships between schools, employers, and community-based organizations that devise innovative community-wide approaches to increase the rate at which economically disadvantaged and limited-English proficient youth complete and excel in high school and subsequently increase the rate at which these youth go on to post-secondary education, training, and higher paying careers. This new proposal builds on last year's Hispanic Education Action Plan, which received nearly \$500 million for FY1999.
- **Doubles GEAR-UP for College Program.** President Clinton's balanced budget doubles funding -- from \$120 million in FY99 to \$240 million in FY2000 -- for the GEAR UP program that supports States and partnerships between high-poverty middle or junior high schools and colleges to help low-income children prepare for and enroll in college. In 2000, GEAR UP will reach 381,000 students.
- **New \$50 Million Regional Youth Employment Initiative.** The President's balanced budget provides \$50 million for a Regional Empowerment Zone Program to assist urban Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities (EZ/ECs) in linking their economic development strategies to their broader metropolitan regional economies in order to increase the employment of disadvantaged youth.
- **\$65 Million to Prepare Disadvantaged Youth for Success in College.** The President's budget will include a \$30 million increase in federal TRIO programs, including Upward Bound, to fund outreach, counseling, and educational support to help disadvantaged students prepare for academic success in college. The budget will also include \$35 million for a new initiative to help disadvantaged students stay in college and earn diplomas.