

The Washington Times

EDITORIAL: The federal job-training boondoggle

Obama proposes a 48th attempt to create jobs with more government ‘help’

Date: April 23, 2014

No problem is so insurmountable that it can't be solved with a government program. If the program doesn't work, the government has a remedy for that, too — another government program. This strikes the average American as bunk, but it's how this White House sees the world.

The executive branch of the government administers 47 separate job-training programs, not counting the \$600 million effort that President Obama proposed last week. This adds to the \$18 billion sum already being spent each year.

The president's scheme would dole out \$500 million in grants to **schools** that develop the best job-training programs (however defined). The remaining \$100 million would go to community colleges to expand apprenticeship programs with local employers.

This may be the first time that Mr. Obama has acknowledged that a four-year college degree isn't necessarily best for everyone. Instead of racking up five figures in student **loans**, some students would be better off learning a marketable trade. Unfortunately, the proposed pork for schools does little for the millions already in the unemployment lines, and the most fundamental problems remain unseen, unaddressed and unanswered.

The men and women in green eyeshades at the Government Accountability **Office** have been watching the waste, fraud, duplication and ineffectiveness of federal job-training programs. From the New Deal's Works Progress Administration, the old WPA, federal training programs blossomed into 47 programs administered by nine federal agencies, all striving without much success to accomplish the same thing.

Chris Edwards of the Cato Institute and Daniel Murphy, a former official of the Department of Labor, studied this and found that the average six-month **income** difference between workers who took federal job training and those who did not, was \$615. That's not much of a return on training that cost \$4,000 for each federally trained worker.

The biggest winners under the current system are the layabouts who figured out how to game the system. Government Accountability Office investigators discovered an admitted thief who

received more than \$100,000 in job-training benefits. A state audit caught the Tampa Bay Workforce Alliance at running up \$225,000 in questionable expenses by its staff, including lavish food outlays. One government grant provided \$500,000 for training in asbestos removal, which exposed high school students in Merced County, Calif., to carcinogens.

The federal government is clumsily managing programs that are thriving in the private sector, which include job-listing websites, networking organizations, career counseling, temporary placement firms, coaching and mentoring, as well as online adult and continuing education. All of these accomplish far more than federal programs can.

Mr. Obama's latest scheme won't help the 10.5 million receiving unemployment benefits, nor will it help the 10 million more stuck in part-time jobs. What would help is to take the \$18 billion wasted on training programs and put it to use on real and working programs.

No program will help if there are no jobs. Proclamations from Washington don't create prosperity or economic growth. Private innovation and investment is what works, not a 48th federal program to supplement 47 that failed.