

NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL
WEATHER INFORMATION SYS-
TEMS ACT IMPROVEMENTS

HON. JAMES A. TRAFICANT, JR.

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 4, 1995

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, last year I introduced legislation H.R. 1016, which would amend the National Agriculture Weather Information Systems Act of 1990 to improve the collection and distribution of weather information to assist agricultural producers. Today, I am again introducing this bill, and I urge all Members to cosponsor this important legislation.

The 1990 farm bill established the National Agricultural Weather Information System under the U.S. Department of Agriculture to meet the weather and climate information needs of agricultural producers. I believe that the program is vital because it collects and organizes weather information from universities, State programs, Federal agencies and the private weather consulting sector. Moreover, it provides funding for weather research programs.

However, it provides for the establishment of only 10 State agricultural weather information systems that are responsible for disseminating information to agricultural producers in those States. That leaves a large portion of this Nation's agricultural producers without any assistance.

Mr. Speaker, my legislation fills the gaps left by present law by requiring the Secretary of Agriculture to enter into an agreement with the Secretary of Commerce to use Weather Service offices and Weather Service forecast offices to collect, organize, and distribute information aimed at meeting the short-term and long-term weather and climate information needs of agricultural producers. Each field office of the National Weather Service will be responsible for collecting and organizing information that will impact the region that it covers.

H.R. 1016 will provide agricultural producers throughout the Nation with comprehensive and timely information. Weather information is central to agricultural producers across the Nation because variations in weather conditions can cause huge losses in production. My legislation will reduce the risk of profit loss.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to cosponsor this important legislation.

INTRODUCTION OF THE STATE
MARITIME ACADEMY LICENSING
RELIEF ACT

HON. JACK FIELDS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 4, 1995

Mr. FIELDS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce today a bill to provide relief to the young men and women who attend our State maritime academies: Texas A&M University at Galveston, the California Maritime Academy, the Great Lakes Regional Maritime Academy, the Maine Maritime Academy, the Massachusetts Maritime Academy, and the New York Maritime Academy.

These academies educate and train licensed officers for service during war and

peace in the maritime industry, the Navy, the Coast Guard, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Unlike students enrolled at the national service academies, cadets at our six State maritime academies pay their own tuition and fees for their education, including training cruises and naval science courses. In addition, their academic year lasts 11 months, which deprives them of the opportunity for summer employment. In order to get a maritime job, graduates have to take and pass examinations for a license as an engine or deck officer.

Regrettably, in 1990, the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act—Public Law 101-508—removed longstanding prohibitions against the collection of fees or charges for these examinations and licenses. While I oppose any fee or charge for the issuance of a maritime license, I am particularly distressed that there are no exemptions from these fees, and that they even apply to cadets graduating from our State maritime academies. In response to that act, the Coast Guard has imposed a number of new fees requiring these fine young men and women to pay up to \$500 to obtain their licenses and merchant mariner documents.

Mr. Speaker, State maritime academy cadets, who normally take a licensing examination within 3 months of graduation, do not have the financial resources to pay these fees. They have just completed 4 years of college, have spent thousands of dollars on college expenses, and have yet to earn a penny in their chosen profession. The fees place a heavy burden on cadets at a time when they can least afford it. These fees are a disincentive to those contemplating a career in the U.S. maritime industry and they are patently unfair, in that other transportation professionals, like airline pilots and railroad engineers, are not required to pay licensing or examination fees.

These fees will do little to reduce our Federal deficit; they will cause tremendous pain for our State maritime academy graduates; and they will further strain the U.S. merchant marine industry, which is struggling for its survival.

Superintendents at the State academies strongly recommend that the user fees for licenses be repealed for all cadets taking an entry level examination. These superintendents have previously testified during congressional hearings that "it is unconscionable to mandate to young men and women who pay for an education which clearly supports our national security to take and pass a licensing exam, and then charge them a fee to take it. In essence, the user fee is a graduation tax which is exorbitant in relation to an entry level cadet's income history."

While my preference would be to either repeal these onerous fees or waive them for first-time recipients, unfortunately, the Congressional Budget Office has indicated that either approach would create a pay-as-you-go [PAYGO] budget problem. Since I am not interested in increasing anyone's tax burden, I have decided to solve this problem in a different way.

Under my bill, our six State maritime academies would each receive a portion of a \$300,000 authorization to pay any Coast Guard user fees associated with the cost of a cadet obtaining an original license and merchant mariner document. Furthermore, this reimbursement system would only be activated when Congress appropriates the additional

money required to satisfy this purpose. Until that occurs, State maritime cadets will have to pay their own fees. In this way, Congress can ease the financial burden on these maritime cadets without forcing their academies to reduce funding for vital training or educational programs.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in support of the State Maritime Academy Licensing Relief Act.

JOB TRAINING

HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 4, 1995

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to insert my Washington Report for Wednesday, January 4, 1995 into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

JOB TRAINING

An important challenge for the nation is to equip American workers with the skills and training necessary to find jobs in today's labor force. In talking with employers in Indiana, I am constantly impressed with the mismatch between the skills Hoosiers have and the skills managers require. Many workers have skills, but not the right skills that high technology companies require to compete globally. The problem is how you move a work force suited to one type of economy into a world that demands different skills.

PRIVATE SECTOR TRAINING

The private sector has taken the lead on training and retraining the work force. Such efforts vary from firm to firm, but tend to predominate in larger companies. Corporate restructuring has reassigned responsibility from upper management to workers and supervisors, increasing the need for management and team-based skills at these levels. Companies have recognized that survival in the global marketplace requires a flexible work force with diverse skills and adaptability to new work routines and environments. On average, employers spend about 2% of their payroll on training.

The skills that are needed in the workplace are fairly well agreed upon. Workers need the ability to develop work schedules, budget money and assign staff. They require interpersonal skills. They need to know how to use computers to gather and process information. They must understand how their own work fits into the work around them so that they can solve problems. They also need to deal with new technologies in an everchanging workplace.

None of these skills replaces the needed proficiency in the basics: reading, writing and arithmetic. Without those basic skills, the other skills would be of little value. The important thing is that the education system produce learners, not knowers. Workers need to demonstrate a mastery of skills more than the accumulation of a body of knowledge.

FEDERAL PROGRAMS

The federal government runs a number of training programs to help complement private sector efforts, but many of those programs have had a mixed record of success. The federal government spent about \$25 billion last year on more than 150 employment and training programs administered by 14 agencies. Many of these programs are small and receive limited funding, and most are managed in cooperation with state governments. In Indiana, for example, the Indiana