

Passage of this legislation will help business remain competitive by giving private sector-led boards the tools they need to address the skill needs of employees and the training needs of job seekers.

Among the many excellent provisions in this bill, the NAPIC Board has identified four compelling reasons to support S. 1186.

The legislation strengthens the private sector voice in the oversight of public employment and training programs. The proposed Workforce Investment Partnerships will ensure that we have a market-driven public employment and training system in place to meet the needs of businesses and job seekers alike. The enhanced role for employers will result in better linkages between job seekers and careers.

It deregulates youth programs, offering communities more options to fashion local strategies that will help young people stay in school and prepare out-of-school youth for careers.

This bill provides the clear balance between state authority and local control necessary for an employment and training system that is both labor-market driven and responsive to local and state wide goals for economic development.

New standards for accountability will guarantee that programs are responsive to the skill needs of employers.

We applaud the work that you and your fellow Senators have done to craft this legislation. NAPIC looks forward to working with you and your colleagues in the coming months to ensure that S. 1186 moves from the Senate floor to conference, final passage, and presidential signature.

Sincerely,

JUDITH BYRNE RILEY,
Chair.
ROBERT KNIGHT,
President.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES,
Washington, DC, March 16, 1998.

Hon. MIKE DEWINE,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR DEWINE: The National Association of Counties (NACo), representing America's 3,100 counties in Washington, DC, is pleased to support S. 1186, the Workforce Investment Partnership Act of 1998. The bill, which would strengthen the nation's workforce development system, will contribute substantially to the quality of America's second chance employment and training system.

NACo believes that this bill will improve the types of workforce services available to our constituents. We believe that it will put in place a system of one-stop career centers that will ensure access to a wide range of client services. We also believe that it will strengthen overall accountability to ensure that workforce development programs meet the expectations of Congress, the Administration, governors, county elected officials and clients. Finally, NACo is of the opinion that S. 1186 will help ensure a highly skilled workforce.

The Workforce Investment Partnership Act effectively draws upon the positive experiences of the past and of our hopes for the future to ensure that this nation has the kind of workforce it will need to compete in the global economy and maintain our standard of living.

We applaud the work that you and your fellow Senators have done in crafting this legislation, and look forward to continue working with you in the coming months to ensure that S. 1186 moves from the Senate floor to conference, final passage and presidential signature.

Sincerely,

RANDY JOHNSON, PRESIDENT, NACO,
Hennepin County Commissioner.

AMERICAN VOCATIONAL ASSOCIATION,
Alexandria, VA, March 17, 1998.
Hon. SPENCER ABRAHAM,
Senate Dirksen Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR: On behalf of the American Vocational Association (AVA) and the 38,000 vocational-technical educators that we represent nationwide, I urge you to vote in favor of S. 1186, the Workforce Investment Partnership Act, which may be considered in the full Senate this week.

The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee has worked hard to address the concerns raised by vocational-technical educators about this legislation last fall. We believe the managers' amendment that will be offered effectively addresses the core issues we raised. As we understand it, the managers' amendment includes:

Assurances that funding appropriated for vocational-technical education programs will be directed to school-based programs and cannot be diverted to other areas.

Assurances that education governance authorities at the state and local levels will continue to have jurisdiction over vocational-technical education programs.

A strong focus on professional development for vocational-technical education teachers, administrators, and counselors.

Increased emphasis on technology. Assurances that unified planning will adhere to the requirements of the vocational-technical education provisions.

Effective support for state administration and leadership.

In addition to encouraging the Senate to pass this important legislation, we urge the Senate to accept the House structure of a separate bill for vocational-technical education, apart from job training, when S. 1186 goes to conference with the House version. Further, we will provide detailed comments on our conference priorities, including additional changes that we would like to see to some of the Senate language, as the bill moves towards conference.

We also wish to commend Chairmen Jeffords and DeWine and Senators Kennedy and Wellstone for their leadership and bipartisanship in developing and moving this legislation. If you have any questions about our bipartisanship on S. 1186 or on any other matter, please do not hesitate to contact Nancy O'Brien, AVA's assistant executive director for government relations, or me at (703) 683-3111.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

BRET LOVEJOY,
Executive Director.

STATE DIRECTORS,
VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL EDUCATION,
Washington, DC, March 18, 1998.

DEAR SENATOR: The National Association of State Directors of Vocational Technical Education Consortium (NASDVTEC) represents the state and territory leaders responsible for the nation's vocational technical education system. On NASDVTEC's behalf, I write to share our support for the Senate's efforts to enact legislation that authorizes a federal investment in vocational technical education. S. 1186, the Workforce Investment Partnership Act of 1998, holds much potential for creating expanded and improved opportunities for our nation's students by providing access to quality vocational technical education. We urge you to support S. 1186, the Workforce Investment Partnership Act of 1998.

NASDVTEC is very supportive of many of S. 1186's features including: a commitment to a strong state role; adequate state-level resources to effect change; assurances that

funds appropriated for vocational technical education can be used only for vocational technical education activities; and a strong focus on technology, accountability and achieving high levels of academic and vocational proficiency.

As we understand it, the manager's amendment will provide the opportunity for greater coordination among programs while assuring that vocational technical education continues to be planned for and administered by education officials, even under a unified plan. While it is our preference that separate legislation be enacted for vocational technical education, we appreciate the additional flexibility provided and the assurance that S. 1186 will build on and strengthen vocational technical education programs and activities that have proven successful.

We wish to commend Chairman Jeffords, Senators DeWine, Kennedy and Wellstone for their bipartisan efforts to bring forward this very important piece of legislation. Thank you for your support of vocational technical education and for your consideration of our views. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 202/737-0303 if NASDVTEC can be of assistance during your consideration of S. 1186.

Sincerely,

KIMBERLY A. GREEN,
Executive Director.

Mr. COCHRAN addressed the Chair. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I may proceed for 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Mr. COCHRAN pertaining to the introduction of S. 1806 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Wednesday, March 18, 1998, the federal debt stood at \$5,537,178,813,514.71 (Five trillion, five hundred thirty-seven billion, one hundred seventy-eight million, eight hundred thirteen thousand, five hundred fourteen dollars and seventy-one cents).

One year ago, March 18, 1997, the federal debt stood at \$5,367,674,000,000 (Five trillion, three hundred sixty-seven billion, six hundred seventy-four million).

Five years ago, March 18, 1993, the federal debt stood at \$4,215,542,000,000 (Four trillion, two hundred fifteen billion, five hundred forty-two million).

Ten years ago, March 18, 1988, the federal debt stood at \$2,481,414,000,000 (Two trillion, four hundred eighty-one billion, four hundred fourteen million).

Fifteen years ago, March 18, 1983, the federal debt stood at \$1,227,793,000,000 (One trillion, two hundred twenty-seven billion, seven hundred ninety-three million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$4 trillion—\$4,303,380,813,514.71 (Four trillion, three hundred and three billion, three hundred eighty million, eight hundred thirteen thousand, five hundred four-teen dollars and seventy-one cents) during the past 25 years.