

# **Speech on the House Floor Concerning the Job Training Improvement Act of 2005**

**March 2, 2005**

**Congressman Luis G. Fortuño (PR)**

Mr. Chairman, back in 1998, Congress enacted the Workforce Investment Act, which established a system for a one-stop career centers aimed at providing one convenient central location to offer job training and other employment-related services.

While these reforms have largely been a success, the system is still hampered by inefficiency, duplication, and unnecessary bureaucracy. The bill that we are approving today aims to strengthen training services for job seekers accomplishes these goals in several ways: Particularly by streamlining bureaucracy and eliminating duplication; consolidating the three adult WIA training programs, giving States and local communities greater flexibility, and enabling more job seekers to be served with no reduction in services; removing arbitrary barriers that prevent individuals from accessing job training services immediately; strengthening partnerships between local businesses, communities colleges and the local one-stop delivery system; enhancing vocational rehabilitation to help individuals with disabilities; and improving allocation and literacy for adults to ensure they gain the knowledge and skills necessary to find employment, including language proficiency.

I want to thank the chairman on the committee for adopting two amendments I have introduced to enhance further employability of the limited English proficient calculation by providing necessary skills, training and English language instruction. I believe this will help tremendously, especially the Hispanic populations throughout the country.

I believe that the backbone of a strong economy and a strong society is a well-trained and highly-skilled workforce. The bill on the floor today is an excellent source to achieve that goal. This bill includes a number of reforms aimed at strengthening our Nation's job training system and better engaging the business community to improve job training services.

It accomplishes this by requiring State and local workforce investment boards to ensure the job training programs reflect the employment needs in local areas; also allowing training for currently employed workers so employers can upgrade workers' skills and avoid layoffs; encouraging the highest caliber providers, including community colleges, to offer training through the one-stop system; leveraging other public and private

resources to increase training opportunities; and increasing connections to economic development programs.

The bill reauthorizes the Rehabilitation Act of 1993, the primary Federal program designed to assist individuals with disabilities to prepare for, obtain and retain employment to live independently; and furthermore, it includes transition services for students with disabilities moving from secondary education into post-secondary activities that can only be determined as a possible alternative to address the needs of those in special needs.

I am convinced that H.R. 27 is a valuable tool to achieve that goal we all have set our minds to. And that is none other than creating a better and strong economy and society that will be prepared to compete in a changing and demanding new world that rises as we speak.