



# EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING REPORTER

*the journal of record in work readiness since 1969*

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# Bulletin Board

## GRANTS

**HUD “SUPER NOFA”** — The Department of Housing and Urban Development announced funding opportunities for 40 separate programs in the Jan. 20 *Federal Register*. Included in the “Super NOFA” (notice of funding availability) are grant opportunities for Youth Build, McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Programs, Public Housing Family Self Sufficiency and Brownfields Economic Development Initiative, among other programs.

**COLLEGE ACCESS** — The Department of Education solicited grant applications in the Jan. 23 *Federal Register* for projects that support early college preparation and awareness for low-income students. A partnership of at least two community organizations, including businesses, professional associations, nonprofits or state agencies, is welcome to apply by March 9 for grants that are tied to the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs, or GEAR UP. Awards will range between \$100,000 and \$7 million.

✓ For more information, contact Angela Oliphant, at (202) 502-7676.

**LITERACY** — Starbucks has announced a funding opportunity for nonprofit organizations that provide

literacy services to underserved youth ages 6-18. Applications for the maximum award of \$5,000 are due March 1.

✓ For more information, go to [www.starbucks.com/aboutus/grantinfo.asp](http://www.starbucks.com/aboutus/grantinfo.asp).

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Employment and Training Administration announced three upcoming training sessions to clarify the Department of Labor’s policy on common reporting measures in the Jan. 20 *Training and Employment Notice No. 16-05*. The sessions will take place in late February or early March in San Francisco, Philadelphia and Dallas.

✓ The tentative agenda is available at [http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr\\_doc.cfm?DOCN=2181](http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?DOCN=2181).

**RAPID RESPONSE** — ETA solicited comment on the proposed information collection request for the National Rapid Response Network in the Jan. 20 *Federal Register*. Comments are due by March 21. The electronic reporting system will allow users to enter data on layoffs through a secure Web site.

✓ For more information, contact Jeff Ryan at (202) 693-3546 or [ryan.jeff@dol.gov](mailto:ryan.jeff@dol.gov). ☆



## EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING REPORTER

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# Current National Developments

## Older Workers

### FEWER STATES REDUCE UI CHECKS TO OFFSET SOCIAL SECURITY

Laid-off older workers in Pennsylvania and Virginia gained the ability earlier this month to simultaneously collect Social Security retirement benefits and their full unemployment checks.

With the oldest baby boomers less than two years away from qualifying for Social Security early retirement benefits, a dwindling minority of states still penalize older unemployment insurance claimants for receiving social security.

In mid-December, Pennsylvania joined 39 other states and the District of Columbia in treating Social Security retirement benefits differently from what is commonly called a “pension offset,” a provision required of state UI laws that cuts into the benefits of claimants with retirement income.

“Older Pennsylvanians have been hard hit by rising health care and energy costs,” Keystone State Gov. Edward Rendell (D) said, announcing the change in law at a Jan. 18 news conference. “Ensuring that seniors who are eligible for unemployment compensation are fairly compensated — not penalized — is one of the tangible steps we are taking to ease the financial burdens on our most vulnerable citizens.”

The law took effect in mid-December, though Pennsylvania officials initially continued to issue benefits checks that were lower than they should have been to avoid disrupting payments entirely. They planned late in January to issue supplemental payments to make up for the additional UI payout that the law entitled some claimants to, a spokeswoman told MII.

### 127,000 Seniors

Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry officials anticipate that the change in law will provide larger UI checks to about 127,000 seniors per year, or about 1 percent of the state’s total population. The change is expected to increase the annual drain on the Keystone State’s UI trust fund by no more than 1 percent, according to Deputy Press Secretary Shannon Powers.

Lawmakers in Virginia took Social Security retirement benefits out of their pension offsets this year by passing legislation that uses a threshold of UI trust fund solvency to determine whether or not the Social Security benefits count against unemployment compensation in a given year. Because the

state’s trust fund met the chosen mark of solvency at the turn of the fiscal year in July, Social Security retirement benefits are being ignored by the Old Dominion’s pension offset for calendar year 2006.

Both states, until this year, deducted 50 percent of the value of individuals’ Social Security retirement benefits from their UI payments. Colorado, Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Rhode Island, South Dakota and Utah still use this approach. Puerto Rico, Ohio and the Virgin Islands decrease UI benefits for retirement benefits on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

## Repeals

Pennsylvania and Virginia are among 11 states that have repealed their pension offset penalties on Social Security retirement beneficiaries since 2002. In 2004, Utah reduced its 100 percent penalty to 50 percent, according to Rick McHugh, a staff attorney at the National Employment Law Project.

“The AARP turned its attention to this topic in late 2002, and all of the movement since then seems to have been the result of the organization’s state affiliates taking on the issue,” McHugh told MII.

There had not been a clear lean by states toward either side of the issue at any point earlier in history.

Amendments made in 1976 to the Federal Unemployment Tax Act required states, beginning in 1980, to deduct the value of public or private pensions and other forms of retirement income on a dollar-for-dollar basis from UI checks. However, that statute included a provision saying that “state law may provide for limitations on the amount of any such a reduction to take into account contributions made by the individual.”

Guidance spelling out the federal government’s interpretation of the law was first issued more than two decades ago and was more recently iterated in *Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 22-87 Change 2*, issued Feb. 3, 2003.

Executive interpretations of the federal law have always held that the statute fails to define any parameters for states that opt to “take into account” retirement benefit programs that were funded by employee contribution.

Acknowledging long-standing confusion among states about how Social Security retirement benefits should be treated by UI policies, the guidance says that states may choose to disregard zero to 100 percent of the benefits from pension offsets they are otherwise required to make.

“Since employees make contributions to Social Security, the state may ‘take into account’ the employees’ contributions to Social Security,” the 2003

guidance explains. It goes on to say that there is no need for state laws to specifically describe whether they are or are not excluding Social Security payments from the so-called pension offset.

Clair Hushbeck, an AARP labor economist, told MII that the organization presses for the repeal of these UI penalties not just because they benefit seniors but also because disadvantaged seniors are most likely to gain from these policy changes.

“By and large, these are people who need both sources of income,” Hushbeck said. “Typically, people retire when they can. People who take Social Security retirement benefits early and continue to work are generally low- to moderate-income individuals.”

### Stimulus

Last fall, Massachusetts’ House and Senate passed two different versions of expansive economic stimulus bills that each contained identical provisions to remove Social Security benefits from the state’s pension offset.

“We expect that we will be successful in Massachusetts this year, as these bills are already headed to conference,” Hushbeck said.

A lawmaker in Ohio has also contacted NELP for information on where other states stand on the pension offset retirement penalty, a promising sign for movement on the issue in that state, McHugh said.

Most state economic security departments that have attempted to estimate the additional costs to their UI trusts of ignoring social security retirement benefits in their pension offsets find that the results will be minimal, he added.

### Doesn’t Cost Much

Virginia officials tracked the effects of reducing a dollar-for-dollar penalty to a 50 cents-per-dollar penalty from September 2003 through August 2004 and found that the additional UI benefits paid to 1,311 claimants added up to just over \$1.6 million. This was 0.43 percent of the total benefits that the Old Dominion paid during the year, McHugh said.

“For most legislators, this is an easy issue. It doesn’t cost that much. It is an inequality and senior citizens are a constituency with political clout,” he said.

More than 30 million Americans receive Social Security retirement benefits. Monthly retirement benefits average about \$1,050 for individual retirees.

According to issue briefs published by the Economic Policy Institute, about a third of Social Security retirement beneficiaries are employed.

“We know that this will get more expensive as baby boomers qualify in a few years, but this is still the right thing to do,” Hushbeck said.

—Ryan Hess

### Older Workers

#### POORER BOOMERS WILL NEED PUBLIC WORKFORCE SYSTEM

While some older workers enter their golden years with a leg up in job security, those at the low end of the labor market face particular employment challenges and could be better served by the public workforce system, according to economists and social scientists who gathered to share their work on age and workforce issues.

This year, as the organization itself turned 20 and the oldest children of the baby boom turn 60, the National Academy of Social Insurance organized its annual mid-January conference around the theme *Older and Out of Work: Jobs and Social Insurance for a Changing Economy*.

Papers and presentations documenting that age discrimination exists in hiring, that older workers are underserved by the workforce system and that older unemployment insurance beneficiaries are less likely than younger workers to find new jobs over the short and long term highlighted the event.

### Topsy Turvy

Even though higher-earning older workers remain more secure in their jobs than younger workers, the job market has become more turbulent for older workers than in past periods of economic growth, proposed William Rodgers, of the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development.

The proportions of low-income 50- to 54-year-old men and women who worked year-round rose by 0.7 and 1.3 percentage points, respectively, from 1982 through 1985. From 2001 through 2004, the shares of these workers who were continuously employed fell by 2.4 and 4.6 percentage points, he said.

While 82 percent of all workers in this age bracket worked year-round in 2004, only 46 percent of low-income workers in this age bracket enjoyed full-year employment. The employment gap between all workers and the poor was similar for workers in their late 50s and workers approaching retirement.

One reason for this gap may be that high school completion was more common for the baby boom generation than it was for older or younger generations, making lack of a secondary credential particularly disadvantageous for them, according to Melissa Favreault of the Urban Institute.

Only about 12 percent of men and 10 percent of women born between 1946 and 1964 currently lack high school credentials.

“Unfortunately, this became an extremely select group, which is really quite vulnerable in the economy,” Favreault said, predicting that almost a third of dropouts from the boomer years will live in poverty in their retirement.

Presenting early observations from a forthcoming study on UI and reemployment among older workers, Christopher O'Leary, senior economist at the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, showed that among a sample of Ohioans, workers over 50 were more likely than those in their 30s and 40s to linger on the UI rolls.

Older workers' experiences receiving UI are important to consider, given that those over 55 made up only 8.5 percent of the unemployed in 2002, but represented 15.5 percent of claimants, he said.

O'Leary and co-author Randall Eberts examined the outcomes, over three years, of almost 288,000 workers who applied for UI benefits in Ohio in 2001. They found that those of prime working age were generally more likely than older workers to enter employment in any quarter after applying for UI benefits and were almost twice as likely as older workers to find jobs 33 months later.

### Wage Loss

They also found that younger UI recipients recovered more of their prior wage levels than older recipients and that older claimants were more likely than younger claimants to stick with the first employer that hired them, O'Leary said.

Cecilia Conrad, an economics professor at Pomona College, extrapolated from a recent study she published on racial differences in customer outcomes and experiences in the public workforce system. She suggested that older minority workers are likely underserved by the workforce system.

In *A Mixed Record: How the Public Workforce System Affects Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Labor Market*, Conrad uses Workforce Investment Act Standard Record Data to show that African American and Hispanic customers of the workforce system were less likely than whites to receive training and achieve positive employment outcomes over the first three program years of WIA implementation. This finding was more acute for those enrolled in services as adult jobseekers than for dislocated workers.

### Father vs. Son

Given that older workers are less likely than younger workers to receive training, Conrad said she suspects that older minority jobseekers are worse off in the workforce system than younger and white jobseekers, in terms of training and outcomes. However, she said, outcome differences among races might be smaller for older customer populations. Employers might be prejudiced against hiring young black men, but willing to hire their fathers, she explained.

After the conference, MII tested this hypothesis with the same data Conrad used for her study, using the Federal Research and Evaluation Database, an

analysis tool made available by the Employment and Training Administration.

Conrad's supposition held true. Of WIA adult program customers of all ages, 51 percent of whites received training compared to 42 percent of blacks and 47 percent of Hispanics. Of those ages 55 and older, 39 percent of whites, 36 percent of blacks and 37 percent of Hispanics were trained.

When the outcomes of those older than 55 are factored out of national employment, retention, earnings gain and credentialing rates, those rates go up slightly, showing that older jobseekers were less likely than other WIA participants to have positive outcomes.

Conrad recommended that the workforce system find ways to address discrimination exhibited both internally and by employers.

"This might include self-audits, offering cultural competency training to one-stop workers and teaching jobseekers ways to address discrimination that they may face in the employment market," she said.

The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, which published Conrad's work, makes several guidebooks available that address these suggestions (ETR 2/2/04, p. 326).

When blindly subjected to a test, employers did respond more to the applications of younger than older women seeking entry-level jobs, another economist found.

### Younger vs. Older Women

For her paper *Age, Women and Hiring: An Experimental Study*, Texas A&M University economist Joanna Lahey created about 8,000 fictitious résumés and sent them to employers in Boston and St. Petersburg, Fla., in response to newspaper advertisements for entry-level positions.

Lahey used five ages, between 35 and 62, that she hinted at in listing high school graduation dates on résumés. She also varied other factors employers might consider in application packages, including workers' athletic activities, needs for health insurance, statements about being able to adapt to new work environments, volunteer work and attendance awards at previous jobs. The researcher listed computer skills certifications for all applicants, but used three different dates for when they acquired them — 1986, 1996 and 2003 — to test if employers would discriminate on the basis of skill obsolescence.

She gave each fictitious applicant appropriate work experience for the jobs they applied for and tried to control for any racial or socioeconomic prejudices that an employer might harbor by listing home addresses in mixed communities and locating their high schools in obscure, small Midwestern towns.

Generally, applications submitted by fictitious workers under 50 elicited more positive responses than those of older workers, she said.

In Florida, it took 16 responses to want-ads to win interview requests for fictitious younger workers, compared to 23 responses for older workers.

In Massachusetts, this ratio was 19-to-27.

### “No Evidence”

“I have no evidence that people don’t like hiring older workers because they think they are slow, feel they make customers uncomfortable, or remind them of their own mortality,” Lahey said. “I have some evidence for statistical discrimination, such as computer skills and volunteering.”

The economist added that statements such as “I am willing to embrace change” and “I am flexible,” borrowed from an AARP Web site of suggestions for jobseekers, made résumés less likely than flexibility-neutral résumés to elicit a positive response.

✓ Cecilia Conrad’s study *A Mixed Record: How the Public Workforce System Affects Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Labor Market* is available from the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. Visit [www.jointcenter.org](http://www.jointcenter.org), or call (202) 789-3500 for more information.

✓ Joanna Lahey’s paper *Age, Women and Hiring: An Experimental Study* is available from the National Bureau for Economic Research. Visit [www.nber.org](http://www.nber.org), or call (617) 868-3900 for more information.

✓ Visit the National Academy of Social Insurance at [www.nasi.org](http://www.nasi.org), for more information about the conference.

—Ryan Hess

## Education

### S.C. SCHOOLS ENTER STATEWIDE CAREER CLUSTER INITIATIVE

Beginning next fall, middle school students in South Carolina will identify career goals to help them plan out their high school courses as a new state law takes effect demanding that high schools structure their curriculum into “career clusters.”

Last year, state lawmakers passed the Education and Economic Development Act, a multifaceted piece of legislation that asks educators, counselors, workforce officials and parents to take on new roles in the planning and delivery of secondary education. Under the law, the Palmetto State is adopting a high school reform model built around schools offering elective classes that relate to one another by career themes in groups, or “clusters.”

Other elements of the state’s new framework for secondary education include enhanced guidance counseling and career awareness and planning activities delivered in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades.

“This is about helping students see the importance of the skills they are learning,” State Superintendent

Inez Tenenbaum said, announcing implementation dates for the law this fall. “If they can apply those skills to real-life situations, it is more likely that they will buy into what our schools are trying to accomplish.”

Elements of the law related to career planning will take effect in middle schools this September.

The law will require that middle schools offer career awareness programming that explains for students the clusters of courses that will be available to them at high schools. Career interest inventories will also be mandatory activities for middle school students.

During the second semester of the eighth-grade year, students, their parents or guardians and guidance counselors will meet together to select which clusters students will pursue and solidify these goals in individual graduation plans. The law requires similar meetings to occur annually to update these plans and review students’ progress on them. It also says that schools must allow students to switch from one cluster to another at any point in their high school career.

### Counselor Caseloads

Under the Economic Development Act, school guidance counselors are to have no more than 300 students on their caseloads at a time. However, the law also contains a clause freeing schools from this obligation if the state legislature fails to appropriate the funding necessary for them to meet this requirement.

Currently, middle and high school guidance counselors in the state each deal with about 500 students, according to Tenenbaum.

The statute identifies 16 career clusters ranging from “agriculture, food and natural resources,” to “government and public administration,” to “transportation, distribution and logistics.”

All high schools in the state will be required to offer at least three of these occupationally based course groupings. The law also requires local school districts with more than one high school to allow students the option to attend any high school within their district offering the cluster of their choice.

In the 10th grade, students will be required to choose a major within their cluster.

For example, electives within a school’s health science cluster might include anatomy, medical terminology, emergency medical services and sports medicine.

After taking several electives, 10th-graders would narrow their coursework within a cluster by majoring in biotechnology, health information, therapeutic services or other majors that local education agencies devise.

Unchanged by the new law is South Carolina’s basic framework of requirements for high school graduation. Students must still complete four English, four math, three science, three social studies, one

physical education, one computer science and either one foreign language or one technical education class to graduate.

The state currently requires that students also complete seven elective classes. Under the new law, electives will have to fit into the clusters.

“Some districts will end up having to add courses, but this is basically taking the electives that they have and arranging them into focused programs of study,” Bob Couch, director of the state Office of Career and Technology Education, told MII.

### **Career-oriented Learning**

The Education and Economic Development Act also requires that students’ individual graduation plans include “experience-based, career-oriented learning” such as internships, apprenticeships, mentoring and service learning activities.

While South Carolina is unique in mandating career clusters for high schools across the state through legislation, agencies in a number of states — Arkansas, Maryland and Nebraska in particular — are developing cluster models that are being widely embraced in their states, according to Pam Kirk, career cluster director at the National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education Consortium.

“All of these states are really implementing this as a mainstream high school reform, which is very important,” Kirk told MII. “Career and technical education really is put on-level with academics when these systems are put together using career clusters.”

The law also includes new roles for workforce system officials. It requires that each local workforce investment area have a designated “regional education center,” advised by a board whose mandatory members include various workforce officials. Physically, the centers can be WIB offices, one-stop career center or other places, the law says.

The role of these centers will be to “coordinate and facilitate the delivery of information, resources and services to students, educators, employers and the community,” the law says.

—Ryan Hess

### **Job Training**

#### **WORKFORCE SERVICES USING TECHNOLOGY TO OPEN DOORS**

Online and technology-enhanced workforce development efforts are expanding across the country, building on the success of several pilot programs that flourished over the past half decade.

Practitioners and administrators overseeing a number of state, local and nonprofit efforts met in Washington, D.C., in December to discuss their work and lobby for federal support.

Some are equipping disadvantaged jobseekers with computers loaded with training software or links to Web-based applications. Others are enhancing the services offered through workforce agency Web sites.

A common output of all these efforts is that they “democratize access to 21st century education” — in other words, make services and training available to people on their own time and at their own pace, said Mary Gatta, director of the Sloan Center on Innovative Training and Workforce Development.

The center, based at Rutgers, the state university of New Jersey, organized the event with hopes that these emerging methods of service delivery will catch on and grow from being “pilot projects” to “institutionalized” aspects of workforce systems, Gatta said.

In 2002, fueled by a Department of Labor Women’s Bureau grant, the New Jersey Department of Labor launched a small program to provide laptop computers, Internet access and online courses to poor, single mothers. Ninety-two percent of participants completed various Microsoft Office courses, and participants experienced a 14 percent wage gain on average through the program, which was taken statewide last year (ETR 10/4/04, p. 85).

### **Computing to Work**

Around the same time, funded by the Department of Commerce’s Technology Opportunity Program, five Goodwill agencies around the country engaged in variants of a somewhat similar program. Their initiatives are built around the concept that equipping newly placed, entry-level workers with computers would help them build skills, contact caseworkers should work impediments arise and generally be more likely to remain employed (ETR 5/16/05, p. 536).

Participant outcomes, such as program completion and wage gains, were surprisingly similar to those in the Garden State, according to Sam Tuttleman, a workforce development specialist with Goodwill Industries International.

In Dallas, the local workforce investment board used Welfare-to-Work grant funds to provide laptops to 1,000 participants and enrolled them in a program run by a company called Business @ccess, which organizes adult basic education and life skills courses, employment links and peer chat groups into an on-line learning community.

After 84 percent of Dallas’ initial participants left the rolls for employment, 14 other workforce areas adopted Business @ccess, either through in-home systems or in employment centers, and recently the Texas Workforce Commission used it to help hurricane evacuees, according to Randal Weir, vice president of Work Source for Dallas County.

“These projects show that this works, and that people are eager to take this up,” Tuttleman said.

Several other states are starting or planning similar initiatives.

In Massachusetts, the Department of Workforce Development recently enrolled 54 disadvantaged jobseekers in a program that will provide them with laptops and access to the Internet and curriculum over the course of 2006. The project will use software from the company MindLeaders for basic skills curriculum and also will provide courses through Massachusetts Colleges Online, a consortium of Web-based programs offered by state colleges and community colleges.

Suzan Kinaci, the consortium's technology director, urged workforce professionals interested in this line of work to inquire with their local or state community college systems when searching for curriculum to offer that results in credentials.

"You don't necessarily need to reinvent the wheel," she said. "Work with your community colleges, who already are your largest adopters of on-line courses."

While largely based on New Jersey's model, the Bay State's program will be unique in that it will extend use of the curriculum, through one-stop career center computers, to some TANF recipients during time that the state will count for participants as work-search, according to DWD Career Services Division Commissioner Susan Lawler.

During the conference, participants met with congressional staff and also spoke with Rep. Rush Holt (D-NJ). Holt pushed unsuccessfully last winter to add language to HR 27, the House WIA reauthorization bill, to specify that agencies may use WIA funds to provide laptops to individuals to participate in distance-learning programs and may allow individuals to keep the computers.

Republicans rejected the additional phrasing, saying that nothing in the law or bill would prohibit such a practice (ETR 2/28/05, p. 371).

A challenge to these types of programs that a number of state and local officials reported facing are policymakers who believe that disadvantaged populations may sell off computers that they are given.

### Client Honesty

Officials from New Jersey and Dallas said they have lost only two computers apiece, a relatively small number, over several years of program implementation. The laptops distributed in Dallas are programmed to open up with a welcome screen that identifies them as public property, Weir said.

"We did have one participant who sold hers and must have had a guilty conscience," he said. "She sent us the ticket to pick it up from the pawn shop."

In Maine, workforce officials are working on plans to put curricular software for adult jobseekers onto laptops that are distributed during the school year to every seventh- and eighth-grader in the state, according to state Department of Labor Commissioner Laura Fortman.

Illinois is also introducing e-learning curriculum in WIA youth programs, though another initiative in the state is taking a different approach to improving access to services through technology, explained Julio Rodriguez, program services director for the Bureau of Workforce Development.

A survey taken in Chicago showed that 8 in 10 one-stop customers reported having other access to computers.

To increase the availability of services outside of one-stops, the state is developing a Web site that allows local workforce investment officials to customize content, such as job postings and the hours and locations of employment specialists, to their service delivery areas. Users can open accounts on the state-run site and their interfaces are customized to their locales.

The site, [www.illinoisworknet.com](http://www.illinoisworknet.com), went live in a testing phase for three workforce areas in July and will be rolled out statewide this year, Rodriguez said.

"This is about figuring out how we can bring services to you — the customer — rather than leaving it up to you to figure out how to find our services," he said.

—Ryan Hess

### Job Corps

#### SMALL-TOWN BATTLE CHURNS, SEWAGE FLOATED AS SOLUTION

Two Vermont lawmakers want to bring peace to a tax dispute involving several levels of government since last year that threatened to literally dim the lights at a Job Corps center. However, there is rumored opposition to their plan, and the mayor of a small town at the center of the fracas says she is contemplating surrounding the residential training campus with sewage.

This summer, officials in the 2,800-resident town of Vergennes threatened to cut municipal services, including street lights, to the Northlands Job Corps Center, which houses 280 at-risk young people. Northlands sits on the outskirts of the municipality, on a sprawling tract of land owned by the state.

For decades, the federal government has rented the campus from Vermont as well as paid the town a separate annual tariff for hosting the center. This payment has historically comprised 10 percent of the town's municipal budget. The feds now pay about \$210,000 for the campus annually.

The federal Department of Labor continues to rent the property. Vergennes' federal funding, however, dried up last year when Vermont's federal lawmakers opted not to fight for a special appropriation. When federal officials threatened to relocate the young trainees at the center, Vergennes leaders backed down from their threat to cut off services,

hoping that state officials would share a portion of the state's rental income (ETR 8/22/05, p. 740).

At the start of their legislative year, state Sens. Clair Ayer and Harold Girard, Democrats representing the voting district encompassing the town, introduced a bill to make the state pay the town 60 percent of its rental revenue for the property, or no less than \$130,000 annually. This is about what Vergennes officials have relied on. Lacking the funding this year, town leaders raised property taxes 3.6 percent.

Sen. Girard told MII that while he hopes the bill, S 232, will pass and put the issue to rest, he suspects that Gov. James Douglas (R) is urging more-senior lawmakers to oppose it.

The relationship between state and city officials soured a bit in 2005 over an issue only tangentially related to Job Corps.

### State Dispute

Members of the Douglas administration battled verbally, through the newspapers and in letters with city officials last year, over plans to locate a mental health treatment facility in the town. Local officials told the state to look elsewhere after state officials declined to help them on the Job Corps issue, instead warning the town in a letter that the Job Corps center could be put to less appealing use, for instance as a prison.

"Vermont is a small state and the governor could have gone down to Vergennes last summer and solved this. He did not. Our idea was that if the administration says it doesn't have the authority to work this out, we'll give it the authority to do so with our bill," Girard said, however, he added that he's heard rumblings of opposition to the bill from more-senior lawmakers.

"Anything that we do to benefit one area is going to be heard about in another area and I have heard some negative comments about the plan," he said.

A spokesman for the governor did not respond to messages asking about his stance on the proposal to dedicate Job Corps rental revenue to Vergennes.

Vergennes Mayor April Jin said the proposal would resolve the problem from the city's perspective, but acknowledged that she is contemplating other ways to raise revenue from Job Corps. Town leaders have said they simply want the municipality to be fairly compensated for the services provided to the facility, given that its students make up roughly 10 percent of Vergennes' population.

Vergennes is responsible for maintaining a road that runs through the campus and street lights that line it. The town has funded the construction and upkeep of water and sewer lines to the school and sends police there both to respond to calls and to participate in orientation sessions for new Corps members.

"I think the bill would work for the city, but we also need to look at what happens if it doesn't," Jin told MII.

Other short-term options might include asking the state to kick in some funding to finish repaving the road that leads through the campus. Before giving in to the feds, town officials had pavers stop work on the road, leaving an scar of new asphalt lying atop the old as a visual reminder that the dispute was unfinished.

Also, she said, the town could ask the state to chip in for replacing a sewer pumping station that feeds the Job Corps center.

Thinking along the lines of sewage, Jin said she is also contemplating asking the state to allow the state to pump treated sewage into the ground beneath 150 acres of state-owned fields that surround the Northlands campus.

Several years ago, state environmental regulations kept towns from emptying the sewage treatment plant lagoons by spraying sewage byproduct over the fields of cooperative farmers. However, Jin said it is feasible to pump the byproduct under large expanses of open land.

Currently, Vergennes pays about \$300,000 a year to a company that cleans its lagoons by drying up the muck they hold, scraping them clean and carting away the unwanted material.

If the state would allow the town instead to pump the muck to the fields around Job Corps, it would save the town that expense, she said.

Now that the municipal funding issue is again a matter of discourse — in terms of the proposed legislation — both the mayor and the state senator said they want to stress their respect for the Job Corps Center's place in the community.

"This was just a fight that had nothing to do with Job Corps, but Job Corps got caught in the middle of," Girard said.

—Ryan Hess

### Occupational Outlook

#### HEALTH AIDES CLIMB GROWTH LADDERS, CASHIERS FALL OFF

Home health aide positions climbed the ladder of occupations projected to grow the most over the next eight years while retail salespeople, registered nurses and college professors remained on top and cashiers fell off the chart.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics recently released its biennial employment projections, showing the jobs that are expected to grow by the largest numbers and at the fastest pace from 2004 through 2014.

Total employment is projected to increase by 18.9 million positions, a 13 percent job growth rate for the national economy. These projections are smaller than BLS' 2002-2012 projections of 21.3 million jobs at a 15 percent growth rate (ETR 4/12/04, p. 473).

This series of employment projections was launched almost six decades ago as a way to help vet-

erans returning from World War II in their labor market reentry efforts.

Of top-20 occupations with the largest numbers of new jobs expected, registered nursing remains the only career on the list that BLS describes as having “very high” average wages (exceeding \$43,600) and demanding an educational level that takes less than four years to achieve.

RN employment is projected to grow by 703,000 jobs, or by 29 percent. These projections peg both job growth and the pace of job creation for RNs modestly higher than the 2002-2012 expectations.

With the 2004-2014 projections, the home health aide occupation rose from previously ranking 17th to now placing eighth in the top-20 occupations for growth, with 350,000 new positions. Typically, particular occupations with high expected growth move only a few steps up or down the charts between different sets of projections.

Home health aide employment is projected to grow by 56 percent over the decade, which would be the fastest among all occupations. This job offers what BLS considers “very low” average wages, below \$20,180 annually, but is projected to continue to be accessible with short-term on-the-job training.

### Automated Checkout

Could it be a sign that self-checkout machines and Internet shopping are taking off when cashier employment no longer ranks among the top-20 expanding occupations? Only two years ago, the cash register defined the seventh largest number of jobs projected to grow in an occupation, 454,000, with 13 percent growth.

BLS now projects cashier jobs to increase by 113,000 or 3.2 percent through 2014.

Maintenance workers, computer software engineers, truck drivers, landscapers, receptionists and laborers rounded out the bottom of the top-20 growth occupations, with projections ranging from 202,000 to 250,000 new positions in each.

Other occupations in the top-20 for projected growth included customer service representatives, janitors, waiters, food service workers, nurse’s aides, general managers, personal aides, elementary school teachers, accountants and office clerks.

Medical assistants came close to making the list; this occupation is projected to be among the fastest growers, with 52 percent employment growth.

This occupation requires only moderate on-the-job training and commands average annual wages in BLS’ “low” range, from \$20,190 to \$28,570.

Most of the 20 fastest-growing occupations, with job growth rates ranging from 34 to 56 percent, command “high” average wages of at least \$28,580 and require bachelor’s or associate’s degrees.

Most occupations that are expected to grow significantly and require little workforce preparation also pay little. However, several occupations requir-

ing only short- or moderate-term on-the-job training will grow by more than 150,000 jobs over the decade and provide annual salaries that meet BLS’s high-wage mark, analysts predict.

These include truck drivers, maintenance workers, executive secretaries and sales representatives for wholesale and manufacturing firms.

Looking at jobs that require higher levels of training but less than a bachelor’s degree, a slew of occupations share strong wage potential and projected job growth. BLS expects carpentry employment to grow by 186,000 positions over the decade. Other occupations that meet these criteria and have job growth projected at 100,000 positions or more include mechanics, licensed practical nurses, office managers and administrative supervisors, computer support specialists and police officers.

### More than High School

Across the economy, about 45 percent of job openings over the decade will require no more than a high school diploma, 26 percent will require some postsecondary education but less than a bachelor’s degree and 29 percent will require four or more years of college education, analysts expect.

Coinciding with job growth, BLS projects that 1.4 million positions in declining occupations will be lost through 2014.

Most occupations responsible for job declines offer low or very low wages.

In an age when computers have eased word processing and document management tasks, various kinds of clerks and secretaries, and even couriers, face projected occupational declines.

Machine operators of various sorts are also prominent among occupations expected to become less common. Some work in the manufacturing sector, such as sewing machine operators, feeders and offbearers. Others can be found elsewhere in the economy or in jobs across it. They include the retail sector’s film processing machine operators and telephone switchboard operators.

Telemarketers, door-to-door salespeople and parking lot attendants are also among low-pay declining occupations.

Several declining occupations, however, pay high wages and generally require only on-the-job training.

BLS projects that the number of farmers — not to be confused with the also-declining number of low-paid farm workers — will drop by 155,000, or 14.5 percent.

Computer operators, credit authorizers, meter readers and chemical plant operators are also disappearing, in smaller numbers but at much faster rates, some approaching 45 percent.

✓ For details, visit [www.bls.gov/emp](http://www.bls.gov/emp) or call (202) 691-5700.

—Ryan Hess

## Job Search

### ESCONDIDO JOB BOARD FINDS BILLING ON CABLE ACCESS

Channel surfers in Escondido, Calif., can now come across job opportunities that allow for a leisurely commute thanks to a new television show thought up by the local Workforce Roundtable.

In early January, the Escondido Channel began airing *Work in Your Hometown*, an automated bulletin board of job postings designed to showcase local work opportunities for local people.

The service allows employers who want to advertise jobs that are primarily located within the city to do so for free on the city's public access cable channel.

The Escondido Office of Housing and Neighborhood Services is responsible for gathering job listings for the program.

According to office Director Jerry Van Leeuwen, the Escondido Workforce Roundtable, a board of agency and business officials that meets periodically to brainstorm workforce issues, came up with the idea as a way to increase worker productivity and quality of life.

### Commuter City

Escondido is something of a commuter city, situated at the intersections of Route 78 and Interstate 15, about 25 miles north of San Diego and 50 miles southwest of Los Angeles and Riverside.

"The commute to San Diego, which is the bigger job basin for us, is rough. Our freeways are packed in the morning rush hour as people heading south past us from Riverside are already on the road," Van Leeuwen told MII.

The bumper-to-bumper factor combined with research that associates lengthy commutes with lower worker productivity, prompted roundtable officials to think up a way to match local job postings to local workers, he said.

Their answer: Escondido's bulletin board system on the public access cable station that is dedicated to the city. This allows jobseekers to find listings without leaving their homes and it limits the audience primarily to area residents, since the Escondido Channel is available only on the city's 35,000-subscriber cable network, which is franchised to Cox Communications. While a job board featuring local listings could have been created on the city's Web site, it would have been open to the world.

To be part of the program, employers sign an agreement promising that the jobs they want to advertise meet a set of criteria.

Ads must be for full-time, nonseasonal positions that are primarily located within the city. The jobs must pay at least \$12.50 per hour or \$10 per hour with commission. The pay rate equals about half the

median annual household income in San Diego County, which encompasses Escondido.

Because median income in the city is slightly lower, city officials are hopeful that matching local workers to these jobs will modestly raise the wealth of the city.

Employers must also agree to allow their postings to run for seven days on the Escondido Channel before recruiting for the positions through other channels.

The city, in its promise to employers, agrees to have all postings that are submitted to the Office of Housing and Neighborhood Services by the close of business on Tuesday, airing on the program by Friday morning. Escondido officials also agree to keep a posting running for 14 days unless an employer requests that it be removed, in which case they promise to take the posting off the air within 3 days.

About a week after the program's debut, it was airing five job postings for positions with security, janitorial and nonprofit housing development firms as well as the city itself, though major efforts to reach out to employers had not yet gotten under way.

During the program, individual postings appear on screen for about 45 seconds and then fade away to be replaced by the next in queue. After all the ads have appeared, the segment repeats.

*Work in Your Hometown* runs daily from 6:30 to 7 a.m. and from 11:30 a.m. to noon. It also runs from 6 to 7 p.m. every day but Wednesday, when city council meetings fill up the latter half of the time slot.

This schedule was picked specifically so that the televised job board precedes some of the station's most popular shows: a morning fitness program and a cooking show that runs during the lunchtime and evening hours.

The program is fairly easy for the housing and neighborhood services office to run, since all the staff must do to make ads appear is pass them along to a technician who operates the Escondido Channel on a part-time basis and enters other bulletin board items.

"Once it is set up, it's pretty simple to keep going," Van Leeuwen said. "The city already owns the TV time as it is provided free here, and I imagine in most parts of the country, by the cable company's franchise agreement with the city."

In terms of cost, he said city graphics developers spent 10 hours developing logos that introduce the show and forms for employers to fill out. Beyond that, it took the city's television technician about half a week to have *Work in Your Hometown* programmed into the schedule. On an ongoing basis, the staff time necessary to implement the job board has been incidental and minor.

"To our knowledge, we didn't steal this idea from anyone, but it is not rocket science. Being that it is such a low-cost service, perhaps other communities would be interested in doing something similar for themselves," the director said.

—Ryan Hess

**Homelessness****S.F. AID RECIPIENCY PLUMMETS AS SERVICES REPLACE CASH**

The ranks of homeless adults receiving cash assistance in San Francisco have declined by 84 percent in the past 18 months since the city sliced benefits to pay for permanent housing and social services.

Under the program Care Not Cash, the number of homeless welfare recipients in shelters plummeted below 400 in December, announced San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom during a recent speech. Nearly 2,500 homeless adults had received monthly cash checks through the County Adult Assistance Programs in April 2004, one month before city officials launched Care Not Cash.

Since then, the number of homeless CAAP clients placed in residential hotel rooms leased by the city has steadily increased, to 1,115 in December. Newsom said that the city plans to open five additional housing sites in the coming months, which will raise the number of available units to 1,855. By that point, the city will have accumulated enough housing to place the remaining caseload of homeless CAAP clients — the ultimate objective of the program.

Homeless adults made up more than a quarter of the CAAP caseload in April 2004, but they now comprise just 6 percent.

The latest caseload and housing referral statistics build on progress made as of May 2005, the last time

ETR examined the program. At that time, 810 CAAP recipients had moved into hotel rooms and 653 remained in shelters (ETR 5/23/05, p. 552).

Prior to Care Not Cash, the San Francisco Department of Human Services handed out up to \$410 a month to homeless CAAP recipients. Much of the funds, derived from federal TANF dollars, now go toward paying for housing units and mental health and substance abuse services.

Adults in permanent housing now receive \$100 and food stamps, while the remainder of their cash assistance defrays the \$1,000 in monthly rent and utility charges for each hotel room. Meanwhile, CAAP recipients who have remained in shelters have had their benefits cut to about \$60 a month.

Homeless advocates have complained that the reduced cash benefits are not enough to live on, for those still in shelters or placed in housing. Some CAAP clients voluntarily left the rolls after losing their generous cash benefits (ETR 5/23/05, p. 552). Since the inception of Care Not Cash, around 900 homeless adults have dropped off CAAP without receiving housing referrals.

San Francisco residents approved the Care Not Cash program in 2002, under Proposition N. But the program was delayed for two-and-a-half years as homeless advocates filed suit, claiming that benefits should not be reduced while homeless people are in shelters. The state appellate court ruled in favor of the proposition, allowing city officials to implement Care Not Cash (ETR 5/31/04, p. 584).

—David Altstadt



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