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On July 19, President Donald Trump issued an Executive Order (E.O. 13845) establishing the President's National Council for the American Worker. The council – co-chaired by the Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of Labor, the Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy, and the Advisor to the President overseeing the Office of Economic Initiatives – will develop recommendations for a national strategy that fosters coordination, cooperation, consistency, and information exchange among federal and local government entities, private industry, and non-profit organizations to empower American workers. Ten other federal officials will comprise the council including the Directors of the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). Within 180 days of the executive order, the council must develop a national campaign and recommendations to create and promote workforce development strategies that provide education and skills-based training. The intent is to prepare youth and adults for the jobs of today and of the future.

The executive order also establishes an American Workforce Policy Advisory Board composed of the Secretary of Commerce, the Advisor to the President overseeing the Office of Economic Initiatives, and up to twenty-five members appointed by the President to serve as representatives of the various sectors of the economy. The board will advise the council on the workforce policy of the United States.

In sync with the President's workforce council initiative, Congress passed the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (H.R. 2353) on July 25. President Trump signed the bill into law on July 31. The act amends and reauthorizes the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-270) until fiscal year 2023. Currently funded at \$1.2 billion annually, at least 85 percent of Perkins grants go to local eligible recipients, which can include school districts and technical centers at the secondary education level, and community/technical colleges, institutions of higher education, and technical centers at the postsecondary level. In addition to various amendments to the previous law, the new law allows state and local governments to set their own goals for career and technical education programs and requires them to make progress toward those goals.

Furthermore, H.R. 2353 encourages local, state, and federal entities to consider supporting programs and activities that increase access, student engagement, and success in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). However, Executive Director of the STEM Education Coalition released a statement that the “coalition would like to see an even stronger emphasis on STEM subjects and activities, and greater openness to eligible consortiums with youth-serving STEM entities and non-profits in the final law and we are committed to working with House and Senate leaders to achieve that goal.”

Sources: Education Week; Federal Register; American Institute of Physics, FYI Science Policy News; Library of Congress; STEM Education Coalition.
