



COMMITTEE ON  
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STATEMENT

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**Statement on the Republican Substitute to H.R. 8294  
Rep. Lloyd Smucker (R-PA), Republican Leader  
Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment  
Markup of H.R. 8294, *National Apprenticeship Act of 2020*  
September 24, 2020**

(As prepared for delivery)

“As we have heard today, Republicans and Democrats agree that apprenticeships play a critical role in addressing our nation’s skills gap by preparing workers for meaningful, well-paying careers. Modernizing the apprenticeship system in this country is more important now than ever as our nation recovers from the COVID-19 public health emergency, which has left millions seeking to reenter the workforce.

The reauthorization of the *National Apprenticeship Act* provides a real opportunity for members of Congress and this Committee to make needed reforms to a decades-old program and bring it into the 21st century. A true reform of the registered apprenticeship system has the potential to expand opportunities to thousands and make the system more effective for those it serves. Unfortunately, the underlying measure falls woefully short in this regard.

To address this shortcoming, on behalf of my Republican colleagues, I am offering an amendment that would modernize the registered apprenticeship program while maintaining the authority of the Department of Labor to pursue models of work-based learning other than the registered system. The potential to pursue other innovative models under the *National Apprenticeship Act* would be closed off if the underlying legislation is passed, and Congress would be stifling the number of opportunities for future jobseekers.

We all agree that registered apprenticeships are a great tool to strengthen the workforce. But that isn't our only tool. Employer-led apprenticeship programs account for more than 80 percent of all apprenticeship programs nationwide.

That's not surprising. After all, it's job creators – not Washington bureaucrats - who know best what skills employees need to excel in the workplace.

The Republican amendment will allow the law to reach the full potential of apprenticeships and help fill in-demand jobs. It would reduce the paperwork burden on states by allowing them to submit state plans under the preexisting framework of the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act*, rather than forcing them to establish a duplicative application process.

Rarely is more government intervention the solution, which is why our amendment strikes provisions in H.R. 8294 that would add to the existing bureaucracy in the form of advisory committees and interagency agreements.

Our approach also provides states with more discretion over how they spend their money, instead of letting the federal government dictate where their dollars must go.

This amendment also makes it easier for more programs – and therefore more apprentices – to access the registered apprenticeship system by removing the requirement setting an uneven playing field between union and non-union program sponsors for the ratios of apprentices to instructors.

All of these requirements are reasons that businesses choose not to participate in the registered apprenticeship system today. What may seem like a 'gold standard' to some often includes more paperwork and hassle to those on the ground hoping to start a program.

If we want to actually increase the number of apprentices in the country, the Republican amendment provides an opportunity to do just that. Without it, this bill simply sets in stone the barriers that make the current system difficult to navigate.

While the underlying bill is certainly a meaningful effort at reform, it unfortunately does not do enough to address the need that our country is facing. For students, job seekers, and employers looking for new pathways to success it slams the door shut.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment in the nature of a substitute so we can produce legislation that will empower workers and employers to create apprenticeships that are responsive to our modern economy.

I know there are Members who have spent a lot of time trying to work through negotiations that have led us to the markup today and I am hopeful that we can eventually come together to support bipartisan legislation that accomplishes these aims, but in the meantime, this amendment in the nature of a substitute provides an alternative vision for apprenticeships with an all-of-the-above approach that recognizes the needs of businesses and individuals.”

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