

United States Senate

January 24, 2014

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

I write to you as a follow-up to our conversation last week regarding the importance of closing the skills gap to both Indiana's and our nation's economies. As part of your emphasis on income inequality, I encourage you to focus additional attention on workforce development, specifically through opportunities for apprenticeships and on-the-job training.

It is clear that for some Americans the economy is improving – the stock market is strong, job creation has continued steadily, and the unemployment rate is getting lower. However, the improvements have not yet been fully felt in the pocketbooks of working class Hoosiers. Wages have not kept pace with inflation, and many mothers and fathers are still struggling to find jobs.

I look forward to the day when instead of workers competing for the same job, jobs compete for the same worker. To get there, we need a well-trained workforce. It is estimated that in the manufacturing sector alone, there are 600,000 job openings due to an undertrained workforce. That is an example of the skills gap that we need to close and the reason why I'm asking you to emphasize the need for solutions, such as boosting apprenticeships and on-the-job training. We need to find creative ways to increase employer participation in education and job training.

This issue is critical to both workers and employers. Without a skilled workforce, businesses will not grow and our economy will not reach its full potential. Without adequate training, workers have trouble finding jobs and better wages. We need to ensure that our workforce and our employers are prepared to compete in the global economy.

If we hope to decrease income inequality, we must close the skills gap. Doing so will increase upward mobility and ensure the American dream of prosperity continues. In pursuit of these goals, I introduced two bills in this Congress - the *AMERICA Works Act* (S. 453) and the *Skills Gap Strategy Act* (S. 1619). Additional attention to the skills gap and creative solutions are needed. I intend to remain engaged on these issues and hope you will share my commitment.

I strongly encourage you to focus federal efforts on workforce development strategies to prepare our workforce for the skilled positions going unfilled today. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Joe Donnelly
United States Senator