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Apprenticeships, Training Trusts Are Key Elements in Solving Workforce Problems

Posted By [admin](#) On January 15, 2010 @ 3:29 pm In [Economy](#) | [Comments Disabled](#)

Daniel Marschall, AFL-CIO legislative and policy specialist for workforce issues, reports on union participation in the final meeting of the President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board.

It is important to build upon the model of joint apprenticeship and training programs as the nation develops solutions to critical problems in the preparation of workers for the jobs of the future, Jim Hunter of the Electrical Workers ([1] [IBEW](#)) Utility Department told the President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board (PERAB) at a meeting in Washington, D.C., this week.

Hunter participated in a meeting of 20 business leaders, nonprofit organizations and Obama administration officials to discuss workforce needs in the energy/utilities sector of the economy. The meeting was sponsored by the PERAB Education and Training Subcommittee.

Hunter discussed the growing workforce crisis among utilities. Many of their highly skilled workers are reaching retirement age at the same time as a great deal of work needs to be done in renewable energy systems and the construction of a smart grid. Hunter suggested that federal stimulus money be coupled with a year of company-sponsored, on-the-job training to help utility companies—many of which have a hiring freeze—bring on the workers they need as the country gradually recovers from the recession.

The IBEW and four utilities have established a national trust to train workers for future jobs. Both the IBEW and the Utility Workers ([2] [UWUA](#)) are partners in the Center for Energy Workforce Development (CEWD), a business-labor-association consortium that is working to build a skilled workforce pipeline for the industry.

The energy-utilities session was the last of seven meetings called by the PERAB subcommittee to obtain business and labor input into the Obama administration's workforce agenda.

In a health care meeting, Cheryl Feldman, executive director of the [3] [AFSCME](#) District 1199C Training and Upgrading Fund, argued for an integrated approach to the education and training of health care workers that combines remedial education, skill upgrading for current workers (in areas such as health information technology), and career development services in emerging occupations such as home health care workers.

Participating in the financial services meeting, Nicole Korkolis, director of communication, education and research for the Office and Professional Employees ([4] [OPEIU](#)), questioned business representatives about the outsourcing of office jobs.

During the manufacturing session, Jerry Evans, executive director of the Institute for Career Development, a labor-management partnership between steel and rubber companies and the United Steelworkers ([5] [USW](#)), called for a national "branding" campaign to inform parents and young people about the career opportunities in advanced manufacturing jobs.

In the small business meeting, Wayne Donato of the USW and the AFL-CIO Workforce Investment Act Task Force, called for legislation that would mandate greater labor participation on workforce investment boards and the adoption of industrywide, regional approaches to federal workforce development strategy.

As reported [6] [here](#), the first two subcommittee meetings on technology and services/retail included labor participants from the Machinists ([7] [IAM](#)), the Communications Workers of America ([8] [CWA](#)) and the Las Vegas Culinary Training Academy.

President Obama established the PERAB by executive order in February 2009. Its 15 members—from corporations, labor and universities—include AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka. He serves on the full board with Service Employees International Union ([9] [SEIU](#)) International Secretary-Treasurer Anna Burger, who is also a member of the Education and Training Subcommittee.

Results of the seven meetings will be synthesized into a report to the full board, with the intention of influencing the president's job creation and workforce programs in the year ahead.

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URL to article: <http://blog.aflcio.org/2010/01/15/joint-apprenticeship-programs-training-trusts-are-key-elements-in-solutions-to-national-workforce-problems/>

URLs in this post:

[1] IBEW: <http://www.ibew.org>

[2] UWUA: <http://www.uwua.net>

[3] AFSCME: <http://www.afscme.org>

[4] OPEIU: <http://www.opeiu.org/>

[5] USW: <http://www.usw.org>

[6] here: <http://blog.aflcio.org/2009/12/18/union-leaders-tell-presidents-economic-advisory-board-worker-training-key-to-job-creation/>

[7] IAM: <http://www.goiam.org>

[8] CWA: <http://www.cwa-union.org/>

[9] SEIU: <http://www.seiu.org/>