

TO: Executive Committee

DATE: 11/03/08

FROM: WIB Staff

For Action

For Information

For Discussion

SUBJECT: Letter to Congresswoman Pelosi

PROPOSED MOTION(S): For Information Only

DISCUSSION: A letter was sent to Congresswoman Pelosi thanking her for the targeted funding and new programs provided for in the economic stimulus package. The letter also encourages her to support increases in the Dislocated Worker Program and Summer Jobs for Youth.

ATTACHMENT(S):

Letter to Congresswoman Pelosi



**WORKFORCE
INVESTMENT BOARD**
MERCED COUNTY

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October 20, 2008

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the US House of Representatives
450 Golden Gate Avenue, 14th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94102

235 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Pelosi:

Thank you for your leadership in working diligently to address the economic crisis faced by our nation. We appreciate the targeted funding and new programs provided for in the economic stimulus package, and request your help in including funding for job training programs. We believe including increases in the Dislocated Worker Program under the Workforce Investment Act and a new Summer Jobs for Youth Program will help Californian's get the skills necessary to gain and retain employment.

As the Chair of the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) of Merced County, California, I feel personally compelled to seek your leadership in providing investment in programs to serve your constituents. Because of continued funding cuts, the economic crisis, and the drastic increase in the unemployment rate—some of our counties are in double digits—it is imperative that additional funding be provided to help stimulate the economy. The State's 49 WIBs and 200 plus One-Stop Career Centers provide a strong infrastructure to serve those most in need of assistance, but need additional resources to respond to the current demands.

Dislocated Worker Program: While we have seen the unemployment rate rise nationally, California has been particularly impacted, and has relatively more dislocation than other states. Merced County has seen more dislocated worker events in the first quarter of 2008/09 than we have seen in the past two program years. This month's news confirms that the California economy has entered a period of recession. Last month's 11,600 decline in job levels brings the State's total job losses to 100,000 over the past year. Our unemployment rate is the highest it's been in over a decade. Merced County has had double-digit unemployment this year during our high employment seasonal agriculture harvest. We anticipate unemployment rates of 15% or higher for the remainder of the year. This, coupled with a 40% decrease in California's federal Workforce Investment Act funding since 2001, leaves us desperately in need of additional resources.

Summer Jobs for Youth Program: Research shows that youth engaged in any type of work activity while in high school do better economically as adults. Providing funding for a Summer Youth Jobs Program would not only stimulate the economy, but would help our youth to gain the skills necessary to become competitive in the workforce. Additionally, summer jobs for youth address issues of gang affiliation and violence in our communities. While it is necessary to react to the immediate national economic crisis, we must also prepare for the future; now is the time to invest in our youth to help them become competitive.

"Merced County's Workforce Investment system will keep pace with the new growth, the emerging economy, and the ever changing needs of the employers by creating a better educated, highly skilled workforce, that's capable, and prepared, and thoroughly knowledgeable."

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Please support our constituents by taking a leadership role to provide additional funding in your new economic stimulus package for Dislocated Worker and Summer Jobs for Youth Programs. Doing so would assist us in meeting the State's needs of workers and employers, and help return economic vitality to California.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Albert Montejano
Chairman