

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

## Support Adult Basic and Literacy Education

March 28, 2006

Dear Colleague,

We are writing today to ask you to join us in sending the attached letter to Chairman Specter and Ranking Member Harkin, requesting a substantial increase in funding for adult education programs.

As you are aware, adult education programs help adults obtain literacy skills, complete secondary school, and improve their English literacy - fundamental skills to America remaining competitive in the growing world economy.

The President's fiscal year 2007 budget proposes to fund adult education at the same level as 2006, \$565 million. This amount, combined with state and local funds, allows the adult education system to serve approximately 3 million individuals a year. The 2007 proposed funding level would not allow the system to serve the same number of participants as in 2006 and it does not meet the increased demand for services from new immigrants, high school dropouts, the unemployed, workers whose job skills are outdated, the unemployed, and parents striving to be their child's first and most important teacher.

The National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) released by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in December, 2005, revealed that 93 million adults (45% of the adult population) had some difficulty "using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential." 30 million of those adults are challenged by simple literacy tasks. 11 million of them cannot even read, write or speak English.

In the future, researchers predict that as few as 10 percent of all new jobs will be available to those without a high school diploma. The unemployment rate of adults without a high school diploma is at least four times that of a high school graduate. To remain competitive, our nation requires a well-educated workforce. Access to adult education programs matters. When under-prepared adults gain the skills they lack, the economy is fueled by productive workers, families are more healthy, stable and educated, and communities gain better-informed citizens.

I hope you will join us in supporting increased funding for adult education. Please call Livia Lam at 4-3441 in Senator Cantwell's office or Kristin Smith at 4-5344 in Senator Snowe's office to sign onto the attached letter.

Sincerely,



# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 5, 2006

The Honorable Arlen Specter, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
184 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
123 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Specter and Ranking Member Harkin:

We write to request that the Committee provide a meaningful increase to strengthen adult education programs. These program help adults obtain literacy skills, complete secondary school and improve their English literacy – fundamental skills necessary for employment, self-sufficiency, and significant to America remaining competitive in the growing world economy.

The National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) released by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in December, 2005, revealed that 93 million adults (45% of the adult population) had some difficulty "using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential." 30 million of those adults are challenged by simple literacy tasks. 11 million of them cannot even read, write or speak English. One way to help individuals achieve self-sufficiency is to provide them with the tools they need to ensure long-term employment success.

Business leaders acknowledge that the shortage of skilled workers is damaging the economy. The higher the quality of America's workforce and the more skills our workers acquire will ensure that the nation today's global marketplace. That is why a serious investment in adult education programs is essential to better prepare adults for postsecondary education and the workforce. Access to education opportunities at all levels is a strong economic driver for our communities.

Researchers predict that as few as 10 percent of all new jobs will be available to those without a high school diploma. The unemployment rate of adults without a high school diploma is at least four times that of a high school graduate. To remain competitive, a well-educated workforce is required and cannot be underscored more. Access to adult education programs matters. When under-prepared adults gain the skills they lack, the economy is fueled by productive workers, families are more healthy, stable and educated, and communities gain better-informed citizens.

Thank you for considering our request to increase funding for the Adult Basic Education program. Without this support, opportunities for low-literate adults and our rebounding economy will be lost.

Sincerely,