

FIGHT FOR AMERICAN WORKERS AND THEIR WAGES

American workers are the heart and soul of our Nation's greatness, and they put the U.S. at the forefront of innovation, entrepreneurship, and industry.

From 2017 to 2019, the American workforce helped create one of the most robust economies in U.S. history. In that period, America gained seven million jobs—more than three times what experts projected—and enjoyed the lowest unemployment rate in half a century. Middle-class family income rose by nearly \$5,000—with low-income and blue-collar workers experiencing the largest gains. Income inequality fell for two straight years, and the bottom half of households saw their net worth jump by 40%.

Juxtapose these accomplishments with the problems our country is now facing. With inflation at 40-year highs and GDP shrinking in the first and second quarters of 2022, workers are losing purchasing power and staring down the barrel of another recession. Yet the current administration presses on with the same radical ideological agenda—as enshrined both in its American Rescue Plan Act and the “Inflation Reduction Act”—of dismantling the value of work in favor of a cradle-to-grave entitlement state that puts government at the center of a weakened economy.

The path to rebuilding the economic prosperity that prevailed from 2017 to 2019 relies on prioritizing the interests of American workers and tackling the headwinds that they face. These adverse forces range from artificial regulatory barriers that impede workers' choice of where to live and how to make a living to taxes that remain too high and drain resources from workers that they could otherwise use to direct their lives and invest in career-preparedness.

At a time of rapid technological and global economic change, adaptability and resilience will prove

key to keeping workers attached to the labor force and able to access ladders of opportunity after episodes of disruption. Gone are the days when workers can count on spending their entire careers in the same industry or occupation. And gone must be the days when workers knocked off their feet by winds of change are left to wither on the sidelines in a perpetual state of government dependence and lack of economic purpose.

The America First vision recognizes that, even if a worker's current skills become obsolete, their dignity and ability to make valuable economic contributions never become obsolete. Traditional workforce development policies fail by being reactive and backward-looking—responding to the economy of yesterday and only engaging workers once already in crisis. What is needed is a modernized approach to workforce development that prepares workers in advance for a continuously evolving economy, allowing them to be ready for disruption before it arrives.

Central to this approach is tearing down barriers to economic mobility such as inflated education requirements and unjustified occupational licensing rules not related to health and safety. These barriers are often little more than an attempt by professional cartels to limit competition and restrict entry to certain professions. With a workforce training landscape modernized based on a vision of lifelong learning and resilience, American workers will be equipped with the adaptability and freedom to thrive.

THE FACTS

- ★ Workers saw record-high median income gains, 50-year lows for unemployment, and record low poverty for all demographic groups during the

previous administration before the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- ★ Under the current administration, the average American worker has lost 4.1% of his purchasing power and paid an inflation tax of more than \$2,000 since inflation began taking off in 2021.
- ★ Labor force participation is a percentage point below its pre-COVID-19 rate for all workers and 0.2 percentage points down for prime-age (25-54-year-old) workers.
- ★ The share of jobs with government occupational license requirements has risen from 5% in the 1950s to 25-30%, accounting for 2.85 million lost jobs and \$200 billion in higher prices.

- ★ Facilitate access to reskilling opportunities that enable lifelong learning and prepare workers to better weather disruption from a continuously evolving economy.
- ★ Forge close private-public partnerships to ensure that government education and training programs provide workers with marketable skills.

THE AMERICA FIRST AGENDA

At the federal level, support policies that:

- ★ Prevent federal agencies and contractors from imposing inflated education credentialing requirements that filter out workers with the requisite skills and experience.
- ★ Destigmatize vocational education and level the playing field by diversifying higher education and job training funding.

At the state level, support policies that:

- ★ Reorient higher education and job training funding to include vocational education and other alternative pathways.
- ★ Enact occupational licensing reforms that lower barriers to entry and competition while also advancing bona fide health and safety protections.

REFERENCES

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