

Jobs, On-the-Job ‘Earn While You Learn’ Training, and Apprenticeships for Young African Americans

Cosponsors: Rep. David Scott (GA-13)

Historically, African American men and women experience an unemployment rate that is two to three times higher than their white counterparts. During economic downturns, African American households are also more likely to face higher rates of foreclosure, food insecurity, and loss of wages—circumstances that often lead to a cycle of poverty for millions of Black families. A major factor contributing to such disparities are the inequitable policies and untapped resources of the nation’s apprenticeship training programs.

As a training program that leads to high-quality and high-paying jobs, Registered Apprenticeships (RA) have the potential to serve as a solution to achieving greater racial equity. According to the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, the US is facing a shortage of 5 million workers equipped with technical certificates and credentials.¹ RAs offer hands-on training opportunities, virtually zero student debt, and the potential to advance in a career faster. With Black unemployment rates reaching a high of 16.6 percent in May 2020, it is imperative we support policies that not only increase wages but also provide a boost to the overall U.S. economy.

In order to curtail the disproportionate barriers faced by Black workers in employment and apprenticeships, the *Jobs, On-the-Job ‘Earn While You Learn’ Training, and Apprenticeships for Young African Americans Act of 2021*, uses the existing Registered Apprenticeship (RA) system as a proven workforce development solution that leads to stable, long-term careers.

Specifically, the *Jobs, On-the-Job ‘Earn While You Learn’ Training, and Apprenticeships for Young African Americans Act of 2021*:

- **Creates a Diversity and Inclusion Administrator** position within the Employment and Training Administration at DOL responsible for promoting and assisting greater African American participation in RAs.
- **Supports the Recruitment, Employment, and Retention** of African American and other nontraditional Black populations in programs under the national apprenticeship system in high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand industry sectors and occupations.
- **Targets High-Earnings Occupations** in construction, welding, electrical engineering, plumbing, information technology, energy, green jobs, advanced manufacturing, health care, and cybersecurity.
- **Updates the RA Application** process requiring new sponsors to include a plan to boost African American participation in their apprenticeship programs.
- **Establishes a Competitive Grant** Program for eligible RAs to create, increase, or expand African American participation in traditional and non-traditional apprenticeship industries.

Through targeted outreach efforts outlined in the *Jobs, On-the-Job ‘Earn While You Learn’ Training, and Apprenticeships for Young African Americans Act*, we can train young African American men and women for high-paying trade and vocational jobs while providing businesses with an untapped pool of talent. This is especially true as the demand for a modernized and technical workforce continues to rise.

¹ https://1gyhoq479ufd3yna29x7ubjn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Recovery2020.FR_Web_.pdf