HR 4297 SUMMARY AND COMMENTARY

Here are some key features of the Workforce Investment Improvement Act, number HR 4297. It passed out of the Committee on Education and the Workforce and may soon be considered by the full House of Representatives.

* The bill requires state and local WIBs (assuming the Governor wants to maintain them) to detail how they will serve dislocated workers (including displaced homemakers), low-income individuals (including recipients of public assistance such as those enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), individuals with limited English proficiency, homeless individuals, individuals training for nontraditional employment, youth, older workers, ex-offenders, migrant and seasonal farmworkers, refugee and entrants, veterans (including disabled and homeless veterans), and Native Americans. While the Governors are to reserve 2% of their funds for these populations, it does not require any specific percentage for each population nor prescribe whether or not the funds should be devoted to training and placement.
* There is no priority for low wage workers in this bill. There is no requirement that the Governors use the network of One Stop Career Centers or the Local Workforce Investment Board structure. While that is implied, a Governor could choose an entirely different mechanism for the workforce system he/she wishes to have.
* There is no requirement that youth, other than those enrolled in Job Corps Centers, be served with targeted programs.
* The bill consolidates 27 existing job training programs that support similar activities to aid individuals in finding and retaining employment. The programs include: (1) WIA Adult; (2) WIA Youth; (3) WIA Dislocated Workers (4) Wagner-Peyser (Employment Services); (5) H-1B Job Training Grants; (6) SNAP Employment and Training; (7) Senior Community Service Employment Program; (8) Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Grants; (9) Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations; (10) Veterans Workforce Investment Program; (11) WIA Pilot and Demonstration Projects; (12) Community-Based Job Training Grants; (13) National Farmworker Jobs Program; (14) Reintegration of Ex-Offenders; (15) Native American Employment and Training; (16) Grants to States for Training for Incarcerated Individuals; (17) Job Corps; (18) YouthBuild; (19) Youth Conservation Corps; (20) Second Chance Act Prisoner Reentry Initiative; (21) Refugee and Entrant Assistance - Targeted Assistance Grants; (22) Refugee and Entrant Assistance - Social Services Program; (23) Refugee and Entrant Assistance - Targeted Assistance Discretionary; (24) Workforce Innovation Fund; (25) Green Jobs Act; (26) National Institute for Literacy; and (27) Youth Opportunity Job Grants.
* The bill essentially block grants all workforce development funds to the Governors. They have nearly complete discretion to consolidate programs that are not included in the single funding stream, except for the Job Corps, which remains a separate nationally administered program. The Governors may determine the structure and method of providing a system of workforce services.