

The Generation Now Workforce Representation Act

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA), our nation's primary law for workforce development, has paved the way for important initiatives such as JobCorps, YouthBuild, the Reentry Employment Opportunities Program, and the Indian & Native American Program. These programs provide essential career and training services to millions of job seekers across the country. Central to these efforts is the WIOA Youth program, which offers training opportunities to "opportunity youth", young people aged 16-24 who are not in school or employed, to prepare them for successful careers. Oversight of these vital programs falls under the responsibility of state and local Workforce Development Boards (WDB). Through collaboration with stakeholders, including businesses and community leaders, WDBs ensure that training programs align closely with market demands. This strategic alignment aims to effectively address employment challenges and foster economic growth within their respective communities.

Despite the pivotal role that WDBs play in shaping workforce policy, their current composition predominantly reflects the interests and priorities of businesses and industries, at the expense of worker representation. For example, unions and labor management representatives currently make up only 20% of State WDBs, with limited representation on local boards, while youth workers have no representation at all. It is crucial to restructure WDBs to better include workers who possess invaluable firsthand knowledge of their jobs and communities. This restructuring must prioritize amplifying the voices of those who directly benefit from WIOA programs, particularly young workers. Their perspectives must be heard and actively considered in decision-making processes. This approach will pave the way for more balanced and effective workforce development policies that genuinely meet the needs of all stakeholders.

The Generation Now Workforce Representation Act (GeNWRA) of 2024 amends WIOA to ensure that the voices of young people are represented in shaping workforce initiatives across the nation.

Specifically, GeNWRA will:

- Mandates inclusion of at least one opportunity youth representative on each State workforce development board.
- Requires representation from youth-serving nonprofit organizations on State workforce development boards.
- Establishes standing youth workforce committees within each State board to provide ongoing recommendations on youth-focused workforce investment activities.

Endorsements

Young Invincibles, National Skills Coalition, Jobs for the Future, National Youth Employment Coalition, Forum for Youth Investment, New Ways to Work, the National Collaborative for Transformative Youth Policy, the Center for Law and Social Policy, the California Opportunity Youth Network, Chrysalis, California AfterSchool Network, San Diego Regional Economic Development Corp, the Social Advocates for Youth San Diego, Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation, and New America.

GeNWRA was introduced by Senator Laphonza Butler and co-led by Senator Tim Kaine

