



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT A Vision for Gubernatorial Leadership

Massachusetts faces a long-term economic and labor market crisis:

- Massachusetts has lost more than 200,000 jobs since 2001
- Population has declined for two consecutive years.
- 1.1 million people, a third of our workforce, are under skilled.
- There are 73,000 job vacancies even as there are 165,200 unemployed.

There are, at the same time, **a shortage of jobs** and a **shortage of skilled workers**. Therefore, growing the number of jobs, while critical, is not enough alone to save the Massachusetts economy.

A successful economic development strategy must grow both the supply of well-paying jobs and the number of skilled workers. Any strategy that focuses only on labor demand while ignoring skilled labor supply will not succeed.

While the legislature has been increasing investment and creating tools to reform the system, gubernatorial leadership is the single most important factor in whether our workforce system can be reformed so that it gives workers needed skills and employers skilled workers. An engaged Governor can both market Massachusetts as a high-skill state and realign and motivate state bureaucracies so they are completely focused on aligning the workforce system with the realities of the labor market.

A Governor who is committed to making workforce development an integral part of his/her economic development strategy would:

- Make the workforce development system responsive to the latest regional labor market data.
- Focus workforce development resources on industry clusters where Massachusetts has a competitive advantage and that possess the potential for the growth of well-paying jobs.
- Make workforce development an integrated part of all regional and statewide economic planning.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of the workforce system in cooperation with the Workforce Accountability Taskforce to better align investments with a state strategic value driven workforce agenda.
- Establish specific accountability measures and allow them to drive funding patterns and make the case for increased funding.
- Eliminate the 35,000-person waiting list for Adult Basic Education and English for Speakers of Other Languages in 5 years.
- Create a permanent; publicly funded complement to the employer investments in the Workforce Training Fund that will make targeted investments in promising industrial sectors on a regional basis.



Massachusetts Workforce Board Annual Meeting

Questions For Gubernatorial Candidates

The Association posed the following questions to the candidates for Governor on April 18, 2006. Candidates Deval Patrick, Christy Mihos and Kerry Healey declined to provide written responses as requested, despite repeated requests. What follows are the written responses of Tom Reilly and Chris Gabrieli. The Association suggests that these be forwarded to your members and partners. They will be posted on our web site and distributed to the media.

1. Please describe your economic and workforce development agenda for Massachusetts. Include how you would approach creating and retaining jobs, reduce the out migration and increase the skills of the workforce at all levels.
2. Please describe your knowledge of and the role you envision for private sector led workforce boards in Massachusetts. Describe the role you see for the private sector and how you would respond to the skills gap and skills shortage in the state.
3. Massachusetts workforce development system is spread over 12 state agencies and spends over \$250,000,000 of federal and state money annually, not including funding for community colleges and higher education. What specific steps would you take to ensure greater coordination, accountability and strategic investment of these funds?
4. Youth unemployment is at the highest levels since records were kept following World War II. Work experience has been proven to be a reliable future predictor of employment and earnings for teens. What specific steps would you take to raise the levels of youth employment, particularly during the summers and after high school graduation?
5. The Massachusetts economy increasingly requires at least an associate's degree to find a good job that pays economic self-sufficiency wages. Even with education reform in Massachusetts, many students are still not graduating with the skills necessary to succeed in college and career. Insufficient investment in public higher education – the pathway through which many Massachusetts natives pursue higher education – has resulted in low relative graduation rates and too few graduates to fill high-demand jobs essential to Massachusetts's economic growth. What specific strategies would you undertake to significantly improve the college and career success of Massachusetts' youth?