

March 2, 2005

Amendments to H.R. 27—Job Training Improvement Act of 2005

Tierney #6 (D-MA) — The amendment strikes all the provisions in H.R.27 related to youth programs, thus allowing current law to remain in place. Rep. Tierney’s amendment would have the effect of eliminating the following items from the bill:

Under H.R. 27 as reported, 25% of appropriated funds (up to \$250 million) may be reserved by the Secretary of Labor to provide Youth Challenge Grants (replacing the current Youth Opportunity program). Of these funds, 80 percent would be available for competitive grants to promote “collaboration and innovation” in providing services to youth, and 20 percent for discretionary grants to promote “innovative and effective” activities for youth. The bill also changes eligibility provisions for youth programs, increasing the age for eligibility from 14-21 years to 16-24 years. In addition, eligible youth must be one or more of the following: school dropouts; recipients of a secondary diploma or GED, but basic skills deficient; court-involved youth; or youth in or formerly in foster care. Priority for youth services is required for school dropouts (70 percent of the youth grant funds is for at-risk, *out-of-school* youth and 30 percent of youth funds under H.R. 27 is for *in-school* youth). H.R. 27 continues to allow funds to be used to serve in-school youth, however, the bill states that services may not be provided on school grounds during school hours.

Velazquez #10 (D-NY) — The amendment would allow unemployed workers to use their Personal Reemployment Account funds to cover the borrower guarantee costs of 7(a) loans, pursuant to the Small Business Act.

Scott (D-VA)/Woolsey (D-CA)/VanHollen (D-MD) /Frank (D-MA) /Edwards (D-TX) /Nadler (D-NY) #9 — The amendment strikes the provision in the bill that allows faith-based organizations participating in job training programs to consider a potential employee’s religious background in hiring decisions.

Though the 1964 Civil Rights Act explicitly protects the rights of religious organizations to take religion into account in their hiring practices, some federal programs, such as the job-training programs authorized under H.R. 27, currently include provisions in law stripping faith-based groups of these civil rights protections. H.R. 27 as reported, restores the faith-based group Civil Rights Act exemptions and would thus allow faith-based groups to receive funds under these programs and take into consideration the faith of their personnel.