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US Department of Labor releases fiscal year 2014 budget request *Budget includes support for job training, veterans, safer workplaces*

WASHINGTON – Acting Secretary of Labor Seth D. Harris today released the U.S. Department of Labor’s fiscal year 2014 budget request, which supports President Obama’s plan to strengthen the economy and grow the middle class through continued investments in training and resources for job seekers.

“The Department of Labor’s fiscal year 2014 budget request is a critical ingredient in the Obama administration’s plan to grow the economy from the middle class out, not from the top down. The investments we make at the department will help create good jobs, upgrade workers’ skills so that they can succeed in those jobs, and make sure Americans can support their families with a decent wage and secure benefits,” said acting Secretary Harris.

The president’s budget for the Department of Labor requests \$12.1 billion in discretionary funding. It invests in programs that improve services for workers and job seekers by modernizing the federal job training system and creating employment opportunities for the long-term unemployed and low-income adults and youths. The request devotes significant resources to putting our veterans, particularly those with disabilities or other significant barriers to employment, back to work. It provides improved re-employment services that enable individuals newly separated from the military to successfully transition into civilian careers.

As the economy changes, training and employment programs must innovate and adapt to effectively help American workers gain needed skills. The FY 2014 budget proposes a new Universal Displaced Worker program that will reach more than a million workers a year with a set of core services, replacing two more narrowly-targeted programs and ensuring that all dislocated workers receive high-quality job search assistance.

In addition, the budget request provides \$150 million for a competitive Workforce Innovation Fund to test new evidence-based workforce development strategies and bold systemic reforms coming from states and localities. Of that amount, \$50 million will be used to identify strategies to help veterans, military family members, and members of the National Guard and Reserve, and \$10 million will be focused on identifying effective strategies to improve outcomes for disconnected youths. The budget proposes \$8 billion for a Community College to Career Fund, to be administered jointly with the U.S. Department of Education, that will invest in partnerships between community colleges and business to train workers for good-paying jobs in high-growth and high-demand industries. It would begin in 2015 as a successor to the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training program.

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The department's request is focused on helping the long-term unemployed get back to work. It includes a \$4 billion Re-employment NOW program, which incorporates a number of reforms to help Unemployment Insurance claimants and other long-term unemployed individuals get back to work more quickly, and a \$12.5 billion Pathways Back to Work Fund to make it easier for workers to remain connected to the workforce and gain new skills for long-term employment. In addition, the budget provides \$25 million to encourage innovative states to come forward with new and better strategies to return UI beneficiaries to work. The budget also proposes reforms to put state UI systems on the path to solvency.

Highlights of the FY 2014 budget request include:

- An additional \$5.8 million for Mine Safety and Health Administration enforcement programs to pursue strategies that prevent death, disease and injury from mining, and \$2.5 million to implement recommendations from the internal review conducted in the wake of the Upper Big Branch Mine disaster.
- An additional \$5.9 million to bolster the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's enforcement of the numerous laws that protect workers and others from retaliation for reporting unsafe and unscrupulous practices.
- Nearly \$14 million to combat the misclassification of workers as independent contractors, which deprives workers of benefits and protections to which they are legally entitled and puts law-abiding businesses at a disadvantage against employers who violate the law.
- An additional \$3.4 million for the Wage and Hour Division to support greater enforcement of the Fair Labor Standards Act and the Family and Medical Leave Act.
- \$5 million for the creation of a State Paid Leave Fund to assist workers who need to take time off to care for a child or other family member.
- An initiative to encourage companies to fully fund their pension benefits by authorizing the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp. board to adjust premiums and take into account the risks that different retirement plan sponsors pose to their retirees. Under the initiative, the PBGC is estimated to save \$25 billion over the next decade.

Finally, the department's FY 2014 budget request continues existing efforts to enhance program effectiveness and improve efficiency. The department will invest in program evaluations to be overseen by the chief evaluation officer and requests increased authority to set aside funds from major program accounts for more evaluations. These investments will provide the department with valuable information about strategies and approaches that work so that resources can be allocated strategically.

For more information on the president's FY 2014 budget request for the Department of Labor, visit <http://www.dol.gov/budget>.

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