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**January 29, 2018**

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## **Business Leaders Fly to Washington, D.C. to Meet with Administration**

In November 2017, Pam Lenzion, Executive Director of the American Boat Builders and Repairers Association, joined nine other small and medium-sized employers in a series of meetings with senior level officials at the White House, Department of Labor, and Department of Commerce.

The intention of the meetings was to elevate the voice of small and mid-sized businesses in the current federal dialogue on apprenticeship and work-based learning, as well as to talk through how education can better keep pace with the needs of business through the modernization of student financial aid.

During a day of meetings, she met with officials working to carry out the provisions of President Trump's Executive Order (EO), "Expanding Apprenticeships in America" which was signed in June 2017 (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/06/15/presidential-executive-order-expanding-apprenticeships-america>). Small and medium-sized employers are keenly aware of the struggle to find workers and even more so, the struggle to find workers who have the necessary skills to be productive and effective in their jobs. Efforts to expand, simplify, and improve apprenticeships and other work-based learning programs are essential to solving the current skills crisis, but there is also a need to take immediate action to get more workers into training programs and into positions that employers need to fill right now.

The JOBS Act, introduced early in 2017, extended Pell Grant eligibility to students enrolled in job training programs that lead to industry-based credentials and ultimately employment in high demand jobs. Many community and technical colleges offer short term programs that provide enough training to get students the skills they need to fill open positions, but they don't require enough clock hours to be eligible for Pell Grants. Without this financial aid, many students cannot afford the training to get the skills they need and employer job vacancies continue to go unfilled. The JOBS Act can help to solve this problem. Shana Welch, (MI) Traci Tapani, (MN) and Pam Lenzion, (FL), talked through the benefits and challenges of setting up an apprenticeship program.

As bills such as the PARTNERS Act, (Promoting Apprenticeships through Regional Training Networks for Employers' Required Skills Act of 2017) and the JOBS Act are introduced in Congress, it is critical that business leaders are front-and-center to tell the story about how policies such as these support not just the needs of their industry, but the needs of workers back home. This set of meetings with the Administration was one important step in the process.