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# HELP WANTED

## A ROAD MAP TO FINDING MORE WORKERS

10 Places for Employers and Policymakers to Grow the Workforce at a Time of Low Unemployment

*An Express Employment Professionals White Paper*

“Business leaders tell me all the time how hard it is to find qualified workers to fill their job openings. Well, here are 10 strategies they can use to grow the workforce and increase the number of people who want to work.”

—Bob Funk, Founder, CEO and Chairman of the Board  
Express Employment Professionals

[ExpressPros.com](http://ExpressPros.com)

## A GOOD PROBLEM TO HAVE?

With unemployment at 4.3 percent<sup>1</sup>, it's difficult for businesses to find workers to fill their job openings. Either jobs will go unfilled, or something must be done to expand the number of Americans willing and able to enter the workforce.

At Express Employment Professionals, we think something must be done.

After more than eight grueling years climbing out of the Great Recession, economists are declaring the United States has reached a major milestone: full employment.<sup>2</sup>

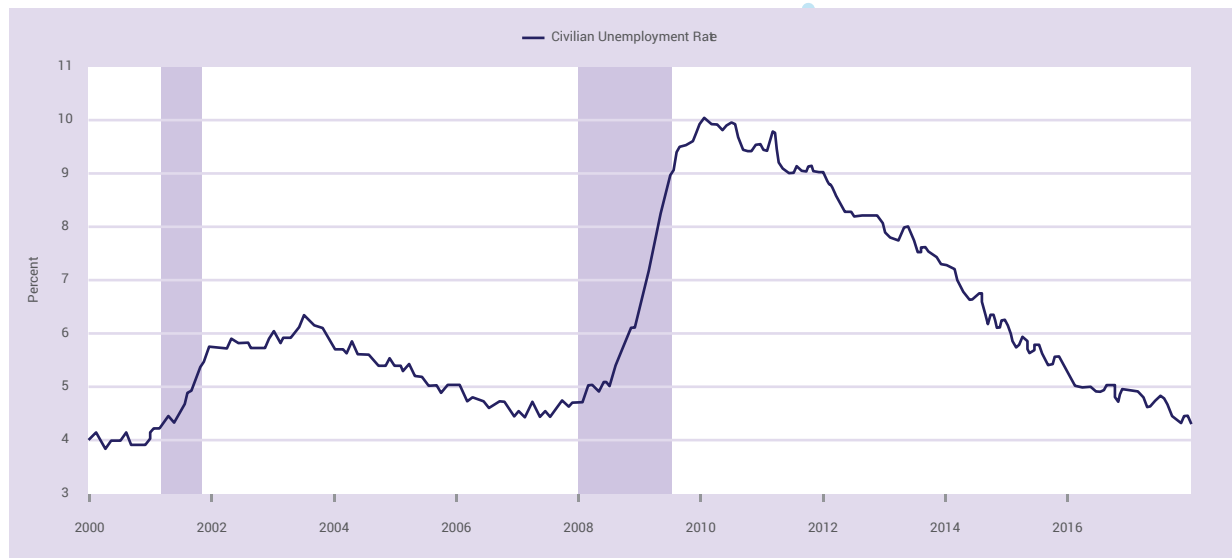
Unemployment is hitting lows not seen since 2001. It is unlikely to get much lower. Some amount of unemployment is unavoidable as people float between jobs, and, economists say, we are at or near that level.<sup>3</sup>

This produces a “tight” labor market. Workers are in demand, but harder than ever to come by. For employers, this is a real challenge. For the larger economy, it can be a good problem to have.

But it's still a problem that must be addressed.

Workers are in demand but harder than ever to come by. For employers, this is a real challenge.

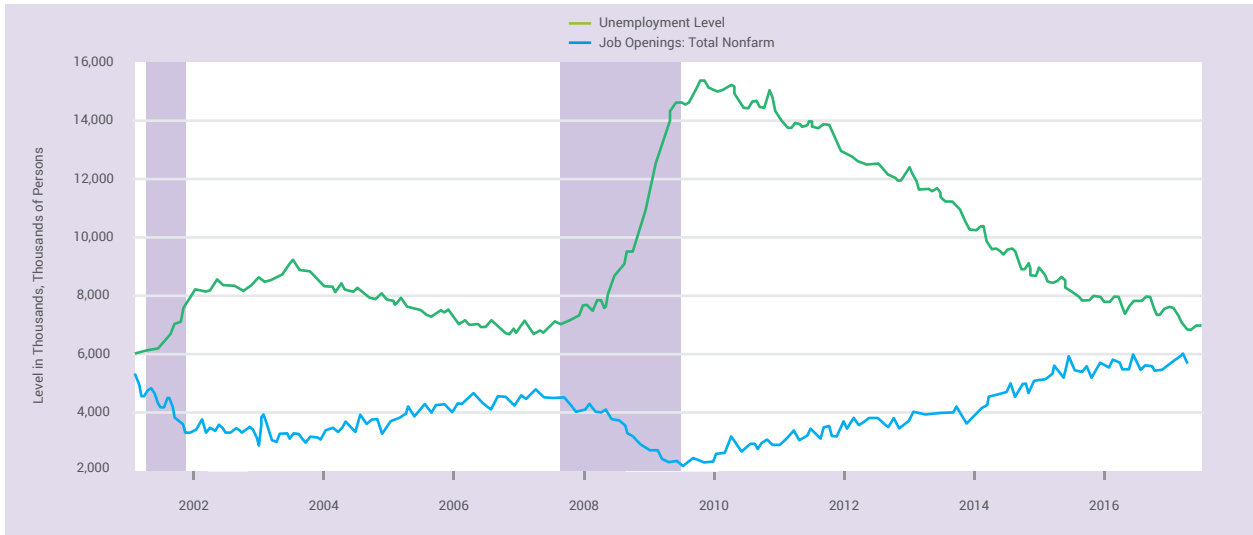
Figure 1: U.S. Unemployment Rate



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis<sup>4</sup>  
Shaded areas indicate recessions.

Today, the number of open jobs in America is greater than at any period since the Great Recession, while the number of unemployed Americans—people readily available to take those jobs—is reaching new lows.

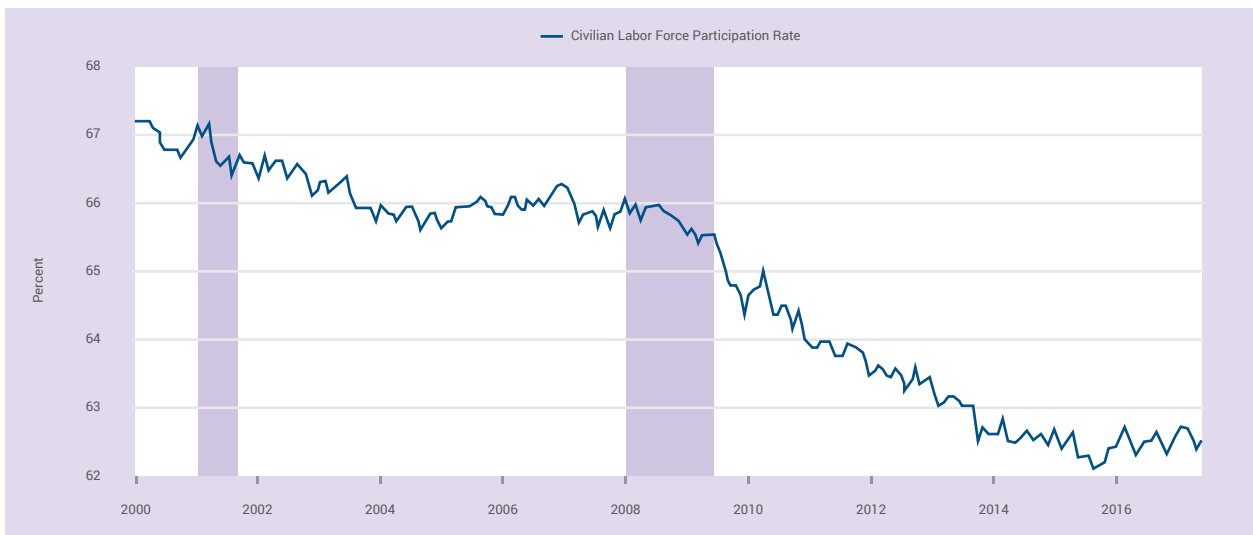
Figure 2: Open Jobs and Unemployed Workers



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis<sup>5</sup>  
Shaded areas indicate recessions.

Still, there are more potential workers out there than the unemployment rate would have us believe—because individuals who have given up on finding work are not counted among the unemployed. From a historical perspective, labor force participation is still low.

Figure 3: Labor Force Participation Rate



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis<sup>6</sup>  
Shaded areas indicate recessions.

# CREATING NEW WORKERS

If employers and policymakers deploy the right strategies, they can find more workers.

We see 10 ways to bring more people into the labor force and create new workers.

In short, we need to stop paying people not to work, add work requirements to public benefit programs, be smarter about drug tests, modernize disability programs and, for many jobs, ban the box. It will also help to raise workers' pay.

## Here are Express' 10 ways to grow the workforce:

- 1** Restructure Assistance Programs
- 2** Add Work Requirements to Assistance Programs
- 3** Improve Access to Training and Re-Training Programs
- 4** Fight the Opioid Crisis
- 5** Use Drug Testing in Smarter Ways
- 6** Modernize Disability Programs
- 7** Improve Workplace Flexibility
- 8** "Ban the Box" or Questions About Criminal Records
- 9** Improve the Immigration System
- 10** Pay Higher Wages and Promote Worker Growth

# 1. RESTRUCTURING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Welfare should not be a permanent substitute for work, nor should it become a trap.

In many instances, welfare programs meant to alleviate poverty may actually trap people in poverty by disincentivizing work.<sup>7</sup>

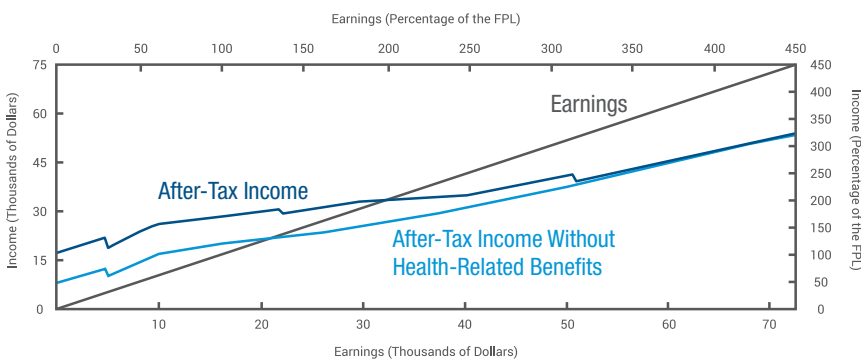
How could that be possible? Imagine this: You receive welfare benefits and you want to find work that pays more. You look for a better job and you find one you like, only to realize that if you take it, you won't actually make more money than you do on assistance. Why? Because you'll lose welfare benefits and have to pay taxes on your new earnings.

In technical terms, you face a high effective marginal tax rate. If making that extra dollar also means you lose income from welfare, then your marginal tax rate is higher.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, some Americans receiving welfare benefits have an effective marginal tax rate of up to 100 percent. They could go to work and bring home a paycheck, but they wouldn't end up with more money in the bank. Other studies have revealed marginal tax rates that exceed 100 percent, meaning individuals or families would actually lose money by earning more money in a job.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 4 from the Congressional Budget Office illustrates how as earnings increase for a hypothetical single parent with one child, disposable income doesn't increase as quickly. Notice that in the \$20,000 to \$30,000 range an increase in earnings doesn't produce much of an increase in disposable income—and can actually mean a small decrease in income. Also notice that for families making under \$10,000, disposable income also goes down when earnings increase, due to lost eligibility for programs like Troubled Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Medicaid.<sup>9</sup>

Figure 4: Earnings and After-Tax Income for a Hypothetical Single Parent with One Child



Source: Congressional Budget Office<sup>10</sup>

At low levels of earnings, refundable tax credits and means-tested transfers would boost after-tax income above earning in 2016. As earnings rise, however, those benefits would increase, causing after-tax income to grow more slowly than earnings.

# 1. RESTRUCTURING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS (CONT'D)

Who can blame someone for not taking a job in this situation? It hardly seems logical for an individual to go to work to earn \$1 only to lose \$1 in other benefits and taxes. What mother would want to earn a few more dollars if doing so meant losing healthcare for her child and/or herself?

“For single- and two-parent households in Illinois, there is a significant welfare ‘cliff’ where the household may become worse off financially as they work more hours or as their wages increase. That is because the available welfare benefits decline by a greater amount than the increase in earned income.”

—Erik Randolph, Illinois Policy Institute<sup>11</sup>



## What Policymakers Can Do:

- Pass legislation that phases out benefit payments gradually, not all at once at certain thresholds.
- When creating or revising benefit programs, be cognizant of how benefit recipients may be impacted if they lose significant resources when their income increases only slightly.
- Expand the Earned Income Tax Credit.



## What Employers Can Do:

- Be advocates for their employees and potential employees.
- Share real-world examples of potential employees who turned down job opportunities because they realized the added earnings would mean even greater benefit losses.

## 2. ADDING WORK REQUIREMENTS TO ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

If you're able-bodied, especially if you don't have children, you should work. If you don't, why should you qualify for benefits, especially when businesses are crying out for workers?

There are currently as many as 4 million able-bodied adults without dependents who are receiving some form of government benefits but are not working.<sup>12</sup>

One frequently debated policy proposal is to condition the receipt of certain government benefits on the recipients working, looking for work or participating in work training programs. Some benefits, like unemployment insurance, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)<sup>13</sup> and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) have some form of work requirement.<sup>14</sup> Others, like Medicaid, do not.<sup>15</sup>

According to analyses from the right-leaning think tank American Action Forum, previous initiatives to link work requirements with benefit programs have yielded positive results.<sup>16</sup> Their analysis suggested that adding work requirements to welfare “raised single-mother labor force participation and lowered single-mother and child poverty rates.”

They also recommended that adding work requirements to Medicaid would provide a “work incentive” for the roughly 1 million able-bodied adults currently on Medicaid.<sup>17</sup> Other experts suggest adding work requirements to Medicaid is not feasible, but enforcing stronger requirements on SNAP benefits for those without dependents would achieve the same goals.<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, some programs could do better at meeting their work targets. States are supposed to meet target work participation rates for recipients of TANF, but many do not. In fiscal year 2014, the last year for which data is readily available, only 30.8 percent of two-parent families receiving TANF benefits participated in work activities.<sup>19</sup>



### What Policymakers Can Do:

- Condition the receipt of certain health and welfare benefits on working, looking for work or training for work, provided the recipient is a working age adult.
- Revisit current work requirements to improve their effectiveness. By including job training programs as an option to meet the work requirement, workers whose skills do not match open jobs will not be unfairly excluded from benefit programs.



### What Employers Can Do:

- Partner with local and state agencies to offer, or guide the development of, job training programs to ensure individuals have ample opportunities to meet their work requirement if they are not qualified for available jobs.

### 3. IMPROVING ACCESS TO TRAINING AND RE-TRAINING PROGRAMS

Some people give up on finding work because they do not have the skills to fill open jobs. Employers, according to surveys from Express, regularly indicate one of the biggest problems they have is finding applicants with the right experience, as well as hard and soft skills.

According to research from Deloitte and the Manufacturing Institute, as many as 2 million manufacturing jobs could go unfilled due to a lack of skilled workers by the year 2025.<sup>21</sup>

Too often, job training programs are not aligned with the jobs that are in demand, or they don't help participants earn a credential with real value.

Source: Express Employment Professionals Survey<sup>20</sup>

“I would caution that we must promote legitimate training programs. I see certain groups promising training, but no one will hire their participants.”

—Chris Ashcraft, Owner, Express Employment Professionals, Mobile, AL

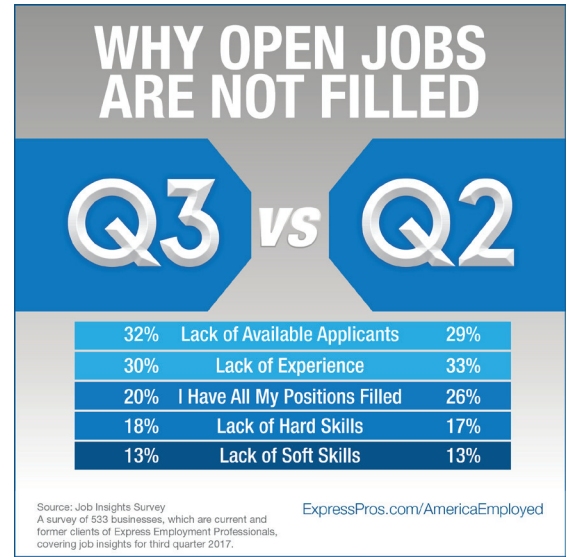
“Employers need to engage the workforce and be part of the solution to create the talent they need.”

—Janis Petrini, Owner, Express Employment Professionals, Grand Rapids, MI

Unfortunately, existing training programs are not always effective. Express surveys reveal that employers pan government training programs, lamenting their ineffectiveness.

There are also plenty of programs, course offerings and even colleges touting retraining programs in fields which demand may not actually exist.

Source: Express Employment Professionals Survey<sup>22</sup>





### 3. IMPROVING ACCESS TO TRAINING AND RE-TRAINING PROGRAMS (CONT'D)

#### JOB GENIUS

From our experience of putting more than 500,000 people to work each year, Express has crafted Job Genius, an educational program designed to teach young adults how to successfully enter the workforce.

Job Genius, an eight-part educational video series created by Express, offers soft skills training to people between the ages of 17-24. The program provides valuable insight into how to choose the right educational path to enter the workforce, covering topics including creating a career plan, resume building, interviewing, and compensation. Job Genius focuses on in-demand jobs, especially ones that are often overlooked, such as skilled trades professions.

Job Genius is just one example of a skills training resource designed with the modern economy in mind. It is available to career tech and high school educators free of charge. Taught through classroom trainings or one-day events, Job Genius empowers the next generation to make informed education and career decisions.

Learn more at: <https://www.ExpressPros.com/JobGenius>



#### What Policymakers Can Do:

- Evaluate government and non-government job training programs. Do they align with the most in-demand skills? Are those completing certifications securing jobs they were intended for?
- Facilitate partnerships between the education institutions and major employers in your region so that workers can receive training for the jobs that are locally available and in-demand.



#### What Employers Can Do:

- Offer training programs. In a tight job market, it may be more productive to train the applicants you have rather than wait for the right applicant to show up. Training goes beyond simple instruction. It also includes mentoring and apprenticeship programs. An earn-while-you-learn apprenticeship approach means that people in need of a paycheck can get paid while they also build the knowledge and experience needed to hold down an in-demand, higher paying job. The employer, meanwhile, gains a new, qualified employee.
- Larger employers should also forge partnerships with local educational institutions—high schools, colleges, vocational centers—to communicate which skills are in-demand and to identify a pipeline of talent.
- Identify the good programs in your area, and help send job seekers in the right direction.



## What Employers Are Doing:

*“Every day we hear the pain employers face with a lack of skilled talent and the challenges job seekers face in trying to succeed. In our more than 20 years of business, we have worked with over a thousand different companies and tens of thousands of job seekers. Now, we are a workforce and employment expert in our community, partnering with nonprofits, government organizations, and educators to provide insight into our local workforce. We collaborate with these organizations to guide the discussion on what changes need to be made to make sure we have the workforce needed for the future.*

*I serve on the CEO council of Talent 2025, an organization that works to ensure there is an ongoing supply of world-class talent for West Michigan. Express is a supporting company of The Right Place, our leading Economic Development Organization. We were also founding members of organizations such as Hello West Michigan and 30-2-2. Hello West Michigan seeks to attract talent to our region, and 30-2-2 is a collaboration between employers to develop best practices in hiring returning citizens.*

*We have also launched several different training and development programs to assist our clients.*

- *Created a leadership series geared towards helping employees, from front-line supervisors to senior level management, develop their soft skills, including topics like communication, accountability, coaching, emotional intelligence, leadership, and more.*
- *Offer half-day, full-day, or customized trainings on manufacturing specific skills, including: mathematics, measurement, blueprint reading, lean manufacturing, and quality systems.*
- *Developed a Department of Labor-Certified Journeyman Apprenticeship Program. We offer clients the option to customize this program to their specific needs, and then we help qualify candidates to enter the program, coordinate all training requirements, and track and manage all aspects of the program.”*

*—Janis Petrini, Owner, Express Employment Professionals, Grand Rapids, MI*

## 4. ADDRESSING THE OPIOID CRISIS

America faces a public health crisis. It is difficult to fathom how quickly it appeared—and how widespread it has become. Addiction to opioid medication and drugs has upended communities, torn apart families and rattled local economies.



**90**  
**AMERICANS DIE**  
**EVERY DAY FROM**  
**THE OPIOID**  
**EPIDEMIC.**<sup>23</sup>

Addiction can be so strong that finding the next high becomes an all-consuming fixation; the effects of the drugs are so powerful that doing once-simple things like going to work become impossible.

Unchecked, this threatens the strength and vitality of the American workforce. Some communities are suffering much more than others, and, of course, the ramifications extend far beyond the workforce.

Wall Street analysts have begun to assess the impact of this crisis on the larger economy. A new study from Goldman Sachs has found that opioid addiction is preventing a growing number of “prime age” workers, primarily men, from reentering the workforce—so much so that it is affecting the labor force participation rate. Unemployment may have prompted the drug use in the first place, but now, studies suggest, addiction has become a barrier to going back to work. Chairman of the Federal Reserve Janet Yellen has made similar observations.<sup>24</sup>

**Inaction is not an option. Delay is not an option.**

## 4. ADDRESSING THE OPIOID CRISIS (CONT'D)

### EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), one effective way for employers to help employees recover from substance abuse is to offer Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs).

Larger companies might have an in-house program with onsite professionals. Smaller companies might work with outside providers to connect employees with the counseling and treatment they need.

According to SAMHSA, services provided might include “employee education, individual assessments, organizational assessments, management consultation, referrals to treatment, and short-term counseling.”

Not only do EAPs help employees overcome addiction, they can also send a powerful signal to employees and potential employees that there is a path forward.

Learn more at: <https://www.SAMHSA.gov/Workplace/Toolkit/Provide-Support>



#### What Policymakers Can Do:

- At the federal, state and local levels, address the issue head-on, focusing on treatment and overdose prevention, saving lives and supporting those who need to re-enter society and leave their addictions behind.
- Cut the supply off at the source; crack down on the illicit trade of opioids.
- Evaluate methods for prescribing medication; improve safeguards against excessive prescription; investigate whether doctors have adequate medical training to prevent the development of addiction and can recognize situations that may lead to addiction.

This is far more than a drug issue or even a public health issue. It is about the strength of our economy and society.



#### What Employers Can Do:

- Become educated about the effects of opioid addiction in their local communities.
- Learn about the signs of abuse and where resources are available to help those who are fighting addiction.
- Set up an Employee Assistance Program—which can be done in-house or with external partners—so that employees and potential employees know they can seek help to fight abuse or continue their recovery.

Advocacy can be a powerful tool as well—raising the importance of the issue with lawmakers and demonstrating that everyone, including the job creators of America, has a stake in solving this crisis.

## 5. DRUG TESTING IN SMARTER WAYS

Failing a simple drug test can cause a worker to lose their job—or fail to get a job in the first place. The mere possibility of having to face a drug test can discourage people from applying for a job—for fear they may test positive for a substance, even one, like marijuana, that has been legalized or de-criminalized in certain jurisdictions.<sup>25</sup>

Certainly, some jobs, particularly those involving the operation of heavy machinery, may be too high-stakes to be trusted to someone who has a demonstrated history of drug use. But jobs with minimal physical requirements or that do not involve the use of machinery may not be affected by an employee's past use of certain substances—or use of the substances during hours that would not affect job performance.

A growing number of states and jurisdictions have begun to legalize the use of marijuana based on the understanding that doing so is a minimal threat to public and personal safety—if any at all. Twenty-six states and the District of Columbia have legalized marijuana, medicinal or recreational, in some form.<sup>26</sup> An employer may be setting an unnecessarily high standard by excluding people from his or her workforce simply for failing to pass a simple drug test.

Source: *Express Employment Professionals Survey*<sup>27</sup>



### What Policymakers Can Do:

- Evaluate drug testing laws. Should there be greater restrictions in the United States on the conditions under which it is permissible to drug test? In comparison, Canadian courts have ruled that there must be good reason, such as believing an employee is impaired, before an employer can drug test.<sup>28</sup>



### What Employers Can Do:

- Use drug testing in smarter, more targeted ways. Consider whether the required drug tests that are a condition of hiring are essential to the performance of the jobs duties. Any requirements related to substance use should align with the specific job at hand. Overly broad policies can be counterproductive, and cause otherwise qualified applicants to be disregarded.

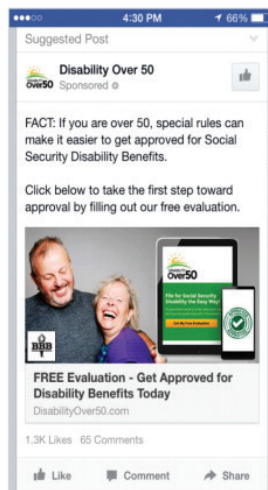
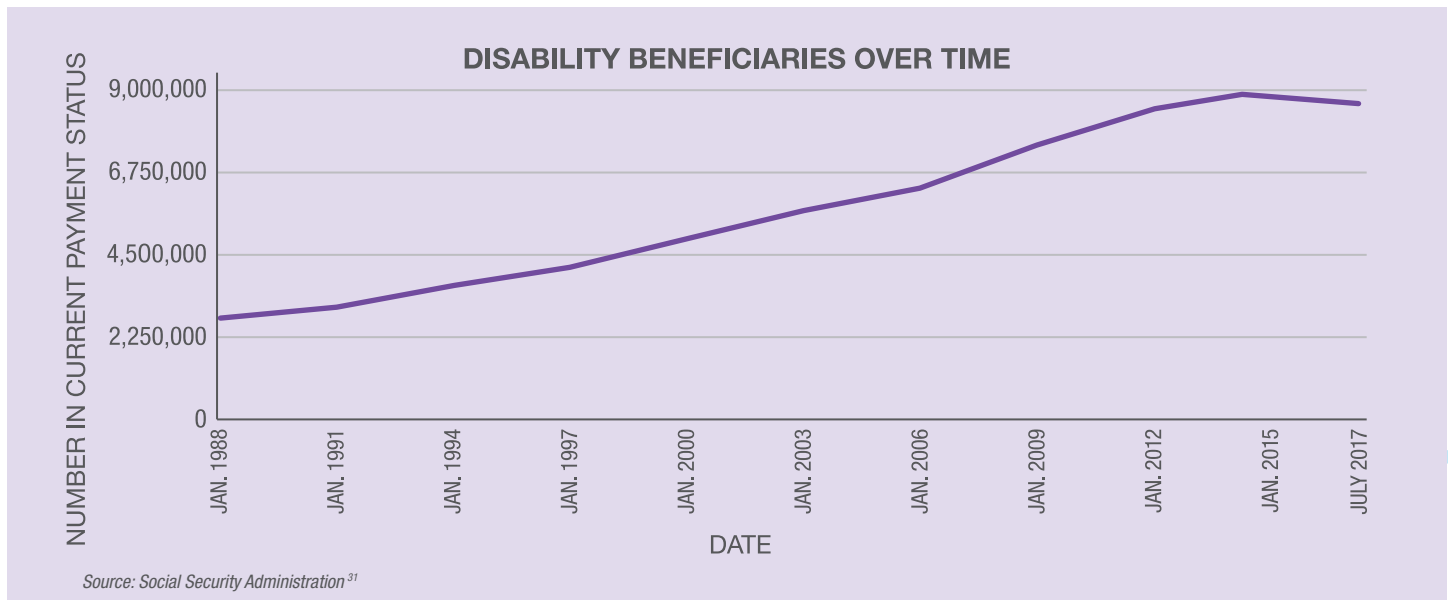
## 6. MODERNIZING DISABILITY PROGRAMS

Disability insurance, a program administered through the Social Security Administration, has an important and noble purpose: to provide resources to those who cannot provide enough for themselves. But like any program, good intentions do not protect it from abuse.

Certain lawyers and doctors have made a cottage industry, or side initiative outside the office, out of helping people who could hold down a job instead of receiving disability benefits. Increasingly, the disability program has become a new and more permanent form of unemployment insurance, especially for those who should not qualify. Even some judges have been found to grant as many as 90 percent of the cases before them.<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps unsurprisingly, research shows that federal disability benefits have become a back door welfare or unemployment program for some.<sup>30</sup>

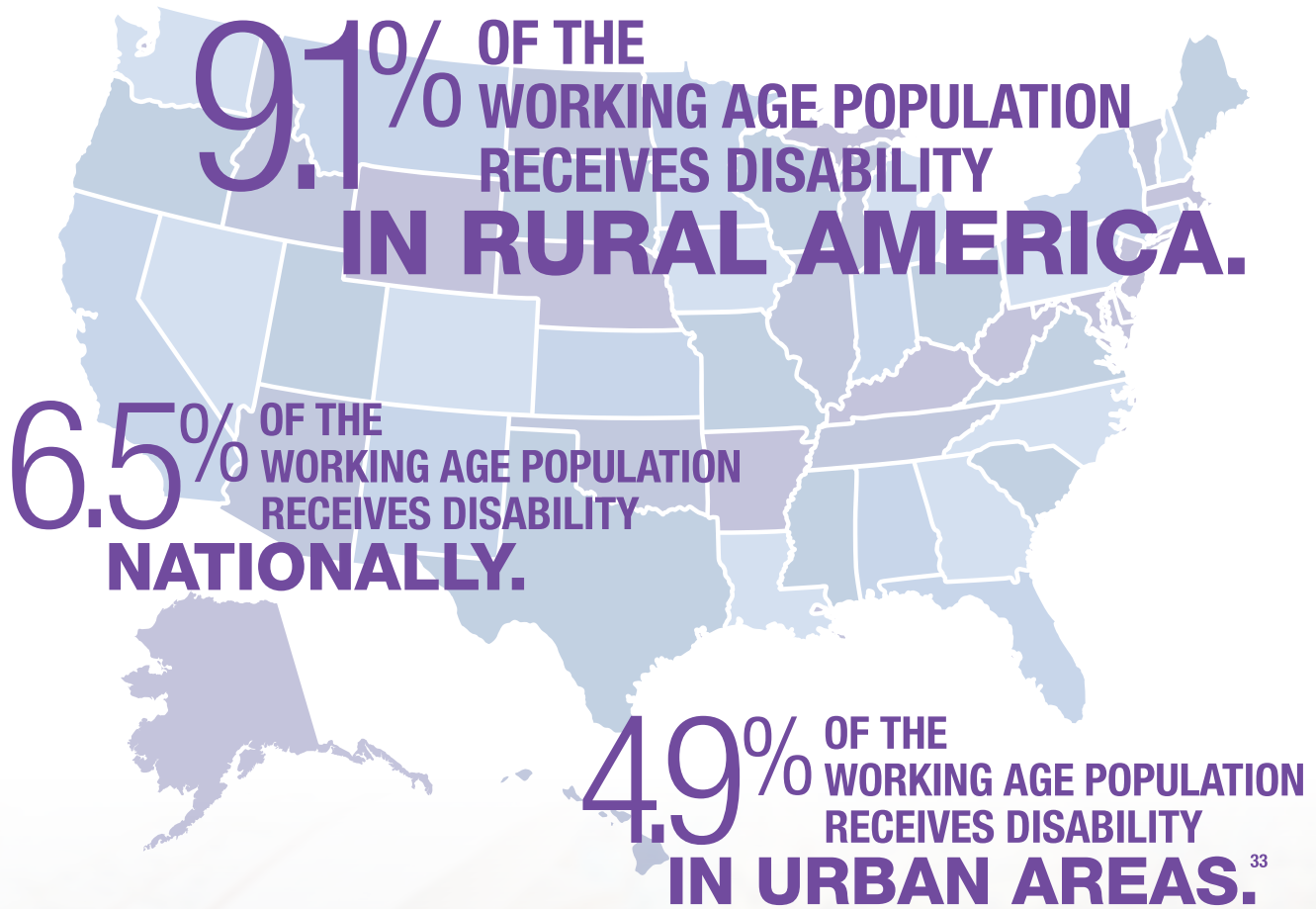
Figure 5: Disability Beneficiaries Over Time



It is hard to blame individuals who are in difficult situations for doing whatever they can to take advantage of lax federal rules. But it is in no one's long-term interest—not the recipient's, the taxpayers', the country's, or the economy's—to let the program continue to provide assistance to those it was not intended to help. After all, every year seems to bring new warnings of the disability trust fund's pending insolvency.<sup>32</sup>

Online ads promise benefits without specifying any qualification, instead citing “special rules” and promoting “FREE evaluations.”

## 6. MODERNIZING DISABILITY PROGRAMS (CONT'D)



### What Policymakers Can Do:

- Refine the program and enforce its rules. Fraud should not be tolerated. Do not look the other way just because it is easier than addressing the issue.
- Provisions should be in place to encourage disabled workers to return to work when possible.



### What Employers Can Do:

- Help people who may be unable to perform a certain job, or the job they use to have, to identify the skills that might make them suited for a job they didn't know they could do.
- Seek out disabled workers who may not realize there are jobs available for them. Everyone has something to contribute, but that does not mean that everyone recognizes it.

## 7. IMPROVING WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY

Modern technology has empowered businesses to accomplish work in ways and places never imagined. For many businesses, the most important question is whether the work gets done—not exactly where or when or by whom.

Yet too many businesses continue to impose rigid structures on their prospective hires—exactly what hours are expected, where the work should be completed and what incentives will, or will not, be offered. It may sound like the simplest way to run a business, but it can be counterproductive. Businesses could miss out on talented individuals simply because they are in situations that do not permit them to be on-site from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. five days a week, such as reliable transportation.

- *Working parents may have childcare responsibilities they need to meet.*
- *Older Baby Boomer workers may want to continue working, provided they can enjoy some of the benefits of “semi-retirement.”*
- *Middle-age workers may need the ability to respond to the needs of an aging parent on short notice.*
- *Younger Millennial workers may place greater value on the ability to work remotely or during nontraditional hours—in order to accommodate other educational, professional or personal pursuits.*

When possible, employers should keep an open mind.

A global study from Ernst & Young (EY) found that “after competitive pay and benefits, the top things employees say are very important in a potential job are: ‘being able to work flexibly and still be on track for promotion’ which was tied at 74 percent with ‘working with colleagues, including my boss, who support my efforts to work flexibly.’”<sup>34</sup> EY also found that 66 percent of resignations are attributable to a lack of workplace flexibility.<sup>35</sup>

“In my market, we would greatly benefit from more assistance when it comes to transportation. Approximately 60% of my workforce has to commute 45 minutes to reach our jobs and reliable transportation seems to be their biggest barrier to employment with us. This segment of my workforce would benefit greatly from some type of subsidized van pools.”

—Yvonne Rockwell, Owner, Express Employment Professionals, Santa Clarita, CA

**It is harder to quantify how many workers do not accept or pursue jobs in the first place due to a perceived lack of flexibility.**



### What Policymakers Can Do:

- Identify barriers, such as transportation access, that might keep employees in one area from accessing jobs in a nearby area.
- Consider providing assistance for transportation or other low-cost needs.



### What Employers Can Do:

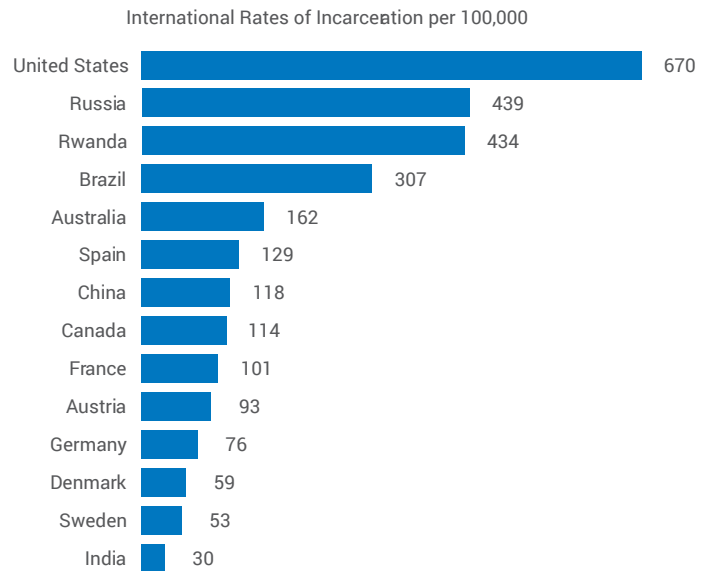
- Offer part-time work arrangements, remote work, flexible schedules and parental or caregiver leave.
- Advertise workplace flexibility, and target demographics that may not consider applying for jobs based on assumptions of a restrictive work environment.



## 8. “BANNING THE BOX” OR QUESTIONS OF AN APPLICANT’S CRIMINAL RECORD

America has an incarceration problem. Compared to the rest of the world, we lock up more of our citizens than any other major country.<sup>36</sup>

Compounding the problem, after these citizens have paid their debts to society, they often find it impossible to get back on their feet and support themselves—because they are dismissed out of hand for jobs. Many job applications ask prospective employees about their conviction history. As part of a broader background check, this may be a logical question. But if checking a “yes” box means an automatic disqualification, it does a disservice to everyone.



Source: Walmsley, R. (2016). World Prison Brief. London: Institute for Criminal Policy Research. Available online: <http://www.prisonstudies.org/world-prison-brief>

Source: Sentencing Project<sup>37</sup>

“Since 1 in 4 adults in the U.S. has a conviction history, the impact of this discrimination is widespread and affects other aspects of life in addition to employment opportunity.”

—Ban the Box Campaign<sup>38</sup>

“Employers are far off the mark and do not understand the law in this area. However, they are open to being educated and are appreciative of our help so the candidate pool is deeper for them.”

—Deb Gray, Owner, Express Employment Professionals, Pittsburgh West, PA

If a job applicant checks the box indicating he or she has some sort of criminal record, an employer is likely to move that application to the bottom of the stack or dismiss it immediately. But what if that record is decades old? What if it is a relatively minor offense? What if that person has turned his or her life around and is more determined than ever to get things right?

Employers would be wise to rethink their approach. It is not only detrimental to their talent pool, but also detrimental to the country—harming our ability to help our fellow citizens reenter society, support themselves and build stronger communities.

## 8. “BANNING THE BOX” OR QUESTIONS OF AN APPLICANT’S CRIMINAL RECORD (CONT'D)



### What Policymakers Can Do:

- Change hiring practices at government and public agencies so that formerly incarcerated people are not needlessly eliminated from job applicant pools or discouraged from applying in the first place.



### What Employers Can Do:

- Welcome formerly incarcerated individuals to apply for jobs. If they are otherwise qualified, hire them.
- Use hiring practices that are fair and acknowledge that a person can be rehabilitated or change.
- Remove questions about past convictions from job application forms. Or, at a minimum, do not let questions on a job application form immediately eliminate applicants from consideration.

## 9. IMPROVING THE IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

From the earliest days of the country, immigrants have expanded our workforce and helped drive economic growth.

In a tight labor market, the contributions of immigrant workers, including temporary workers, can be even more important. Some states have unemployment rates much lower than the national average, meaning other strategies for finding new workers may prove fruitless. Welcoming new workers from outside the United States can be the best solution.

# MANY STATES HAVE LOWER UNEMPLOYMENT RATES THAN THE NATIONAL AVERAGE OF 4.3 PERCENT.<sup>39</sup>

**Colorado: 2.4%**

**North Dakota: 2.2%**

**Hawaii: 2.7%**

**Nebraska: 2.8%**

**New Hampshire: 2.8%**

**Indiana 3.1%**



“Employers from Cape Cod bed-and-breakfasts to Alaskan fisheries have been begging the Trump Administration for more seasonal guest-worker visas.”

—*Wall Street Journal*, July 17, 2017<sup>40</sup>

Allowing more qualified workers into the U.S. would help meet the current demand. In 2017, employers requested more than 120,000 seasonal H2-B worker visas, far more than the 66,000 the government is allowed to give out annually. The shortage is undeniable.<sup>41</sup>

Exacerbating the problem, trained, qualified workers in many industries, but particularly in the construction trades, are being deported or are at risk of deportation.

## 9. IMPROVING THE IMMIGRATION SYSTEM (CONT'D)

An optimal approach would be to welcome talented, capable workers into the country and ensure that they are not reliant on unemployment or certain welfare benefits. Even if all able-bodied American citizens were working, we'd still need legal immigration to meet our growing workforce demands over time to fill positions.

After all, throughout history, immigration has contributed to and spurred economic growth. What's more, many studies have suggested that immigrants don't cause wages or employment of U.S. citizens to decrease in any significant manner. In fact, according to a Brookings Institution review of academic research, on net, immigrants may "expand employment possibilities and incomes for U.S. workers."<sup>42</sup>

Unfortunately, today's broken system often prevents employers from recruiting talented individuals. Even students educated at top-tier American universities may find it hard to secure the needed approvals to stay in the U.S. and put their education to work for the American economy.



### What Policymakers Can Do:

In the short-term:

- Respond to employers' demands and allow more guest workers. Allow employers to hire foreign talent quickly and easily to meet market demands while still ensuring workers meet eligibility requirements.

In the long-term:

- Fix the immigration system. The complex, broken and confusing system is not serving the best interests of the American economy. All sides in the debate should compromise so a long-term solution can be found.



### What Employers Can Do:

- Speak out publicly and with public officials. Employers must demonstrate that immigrant labor can help their companies without hurting American workers—and that their businesses' resulting success would have larger benefits for local communities.



## 10. PAYING HIGHER WAGES AND PROMOTING EMPLOYEE GROWTH

According to the Society for Human Resource Management, “Employees usually feel more engaged when they believe their employer is concerned about their growth and provides avenues to reach individual career goals while fulfilling the company’s mission.”<sup>43</sup>

It is also true that prospective employees are more likely to take a job if they recognize the initial wage or salary is only a starting point and they will have regular opportunities for raises, promotions or increased responsibility or visibility.

However, it’s important for the government to not try to increase wages artificially, like the current \$15 minimum wage discussion. A government-mandated wage increase means some people will see a raise. Others will see pink slips. Some won’t even get a chance to be hired in the first place. And everyone will feel the impact in the form of higher prices.

Let’s give America a raise. The best way to do it is by growing the economy, not trying to control it.

“People re-entering the workforce need to be enticed to do so with good wages and a path for growth. Employers should provide clear growth paths for employees to see wage increases.”

—Janis Petrini, Owner, Express Employment Professionals, Grand Rapids, MI



### What Employers Can Do:

- Demonstrate clear structures and processes for advancement to potential employees.
- Advertise these opportunities when posting job openings and communicate them in interviews.
- Implement them with current employees, even ones who have not expected them, in order to improve the reputation of the workplace.

## THE WAY FORWARD

If current trends persist, America's workforce challenges will only grow. Compared to not having enough jobs, not having enough workers is a good problem to have. But it is still a problem.

The good news is that it is a problem we can solve if we are willing to challenge conventional wisdom and move past the old ways of doing things.

Our mission at Express is to put more people to work, and that is exactly what Express' 10 Strategies are for—putting even more people to work so we can keep the American economy growing strong.



## ABOUT EXPRESS EMPLOYMENT PROFESSIONALS

Express Employment Professionals puts people to work. It generated \$3.05 billion in sales and employed more than 510,000 people in 2016. Its long-term goal is to put a million people to work annually. For more information, visit [ExpressPros.com](http://ExpressPros.com).

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This example incorporates the assumption that the taxpayer files as a head of household, has one child, and when eligible on the basis of earnings, claims the EITC, CTC, and premium assistance tax credit; that all income is from earnings; and that the taxpayer has itemized deductions worth 18 percent of income and claims the greater of those deductions or the standard deduction.  
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