



**NARC**

*Building Regional Communities*

**National Association of Regional Councils**

777 North Capitol Street NE, Suite 305

Washington, DC 20002

202.986.1032 (tel) 202.986.1038 (fax)

[www.NARC.org](http://www.NARC.org)

March 12, 2013

The Honorable John Boehner  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-204, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Kline  
Chairman  
Education & Workforce Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2439 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx  
Chairman  
Higher Education & Workforce Training Subcommittee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2350 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressional Leaders:

The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC), representing the nation's regional planning organizations and their local elected officials, supports Congressional efforts to review and improve the nation's workforce system through the introduction of HR 803, the Supporting Knowledge and Investing in Lifelong Skills "SKILLS" Act. NARC urges a bipartisan reauthorization of the highly effective and vital programs within the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) that modernizes the workforce by granting local flexibility and choice.

On behalf of our 250-plus member regional planning organizations, who cover 97 percent of the U.S. counties and 99 percent of the population, we understand that difficult economic times require a re-examination of federal program success, effectiveness and funding levels. We also understand how valuable the workforce investment system is to local economies, businesses, and the individuals who seek training and education services to reenter the workforce. NARC supports modernizing and improving the current workforce system to efficiently align services and programs with labor market demands and to streamline federal requirements; any efforts must uphold the authority of local elected officials. However, we are concerned about the consolidation and elimination of 27 of the 35 workforce programs in HR 803 in favor of a block grant system.

Successful workforce development requires substantial engagement with local elected officials, who provide essential "on-the-ground" perspective. In order to foster economic environments that promote job access, we must not only improve the federal government partnership with local governments and regions, but also uphold the authorities, responsibilities and obligations reserved to localities. We are concerned that HR 803 compromises the important local elected official role by changing the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) governance structure and ceding critical local decision-making authority to state governors. It is important to ensure various types of employment training are operated by the effective and well-established local workforce delivery system and managed by the WIBs in partnership with local elected officials. Additionally, we encourage support for regional forums to identify and detail plans for specific workforce development initiatives that leverage and align local assets with local economic needs. Such an effort must maintain investment in and engagement of local elected officials and businesses.

Thank you for your renewed commitment to bolstering local, regional and national economic prosperity through WIA reauthorization. We welcome partnering with you to develop strong federal policies and strategic solutions that increase the effectiveness of federal dollars and showcase local and regional successes. Please do not hesitate to contact NARC staff for more information – Fred Abousleman, Executive Director, [fred@narc.org](mailto:fred@narc.org) or 202.986.1032. Thank you.

Sincerely,

David F. Shafer  
President, NARC  
Clerk-Treasurer, Town of Munster, IN