

**Chairman Roy Blunt Opening Statement  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education, and Related Agencies**

**Hearing to Review the FY2018 Budget Request for the U.S. Department of Labor**

**June 27, 2017**

*(As prepared for delivery)*

Good morning. Thank you, Secretary Acosta, for appearing before the Subcommittee today to discuss the Department of Labor's fiscal year 2018 budget request. We look forward to hearing your testimony.

The Department's budget is under significant budgetary constraints this year. The proposal cuts \$2.3 billion, or about one-fifth, of the Department's current funding level.

While I appreciate the Department prioritizing limited resources and making decisions to realign programs, the fundamental question is whether you chose to cut programs because they are ineffective and no longer needed or because the topline number forced you to do so.

This is not the first time we've seen these types of cuts to the Department. Last year, President Obama submitted an equally precarious budget request. While President Obama's budget proposed significant cuts to the Labor Department, it was only because his budget leaned heavily on new, mandatory spending proposals to bypass the actual budget caps. Instead of making the difficult decisions necessary to prioritize funding, the last Administration made the risky decision to move numerous programs out of the annual appropriations process without knowing whether there was a path forward for mandatory funding. Needless to say, mandatory funding did not happen.

This year, the Department submitted a budget that so significantly cuts programs or eliminates them altogether that it is difficult to understand where your true priorities lie.

I have serious concerns with the worker training program reductions – particularly the proposals to cut state grants by 40 percent and close Job Corps Centers. The President has recognized that there are millions of vacant jobs in this country and I hear about the difficulty finding work in the sectors impacting building trades all the time. We need to make certain that our workforce training programs and apprenticeships equip individuals with the skills they need to meet the workforce needs of today and tomorrow.

While there are no easy answers when it comes to the budget limitations we face, I am concerned that reducing funding so much and so suddenly from worker training could further jeopardize our workforce development system, contribute to increasing problems that might hinder individuals and businesses, and have a negative impact on the economy.

As the FY2018 appropriations process moves forward, it is my hope to work together to identify priorities and find common ground on how best to responsibly allocate taxpayers' resources.

Mr. Secretary, I look forward to hearing your testimony today and appreciate your dialogue with us about these important issues.

Thank you.

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