

Issue: Carl D. Perkins Career/Technical Education Funding

In his FY 2008 budget request, President Bush proposed cutting funds for the Perkins Act. The proposal would fund the Perkins Basic State Grant program at only \$600 million, approximately one-half of its current amount. In addition, under the proposal, funds for the Tech Prep program would be completely eliminated. Programs funded through Perkins grants integrate academic, vocational, and technical instruction by using work-based learning to provide technical preparation in career fields. Career and Technical Education (CTE) infuses applied academics such as math, science, communication, problem solving and information seeking with the basic knowledge necessary to learn technical concepts and the relevance of academics.

Nearly 70% of students enrolled at Camden County High School receive instruction through career/technical classes. These classes include: Agriculture, Construction, Metal Working, Computer Maintenance and Repair, Automotive Technology, Marketing, Youth Apprenticeship, Child Development, Culinary Arts, Family and Consumer Science, Law Enforcement, Health Occupations, Introduction to Technology, Naval ROTC, Architecture/Drafting and Teacher Apprenticeship. Although extensive, this is not a complete list of career/technical courses available at Camden County High School.

In all, thirty-six teachers at the high school and middle schools comprise Camden County Schools career/technical teaching staff. Of the 525 Camden County High School 2006 graduates, 365 earned dual seal (both career/technical and college preparatory) diplomas; the highest ratio in the state of Georgia.

If the investment in Perkins is eliminated, our country will lose many of the critical tools necessary to ensure America's economic and global standing. According to the National Summit on 21st Century Skills for 21st Century Jobs, the percentage of skilled and unskilled jobs in America have changed dramatically between 1950 and 1997. Jobs for skilled workers increased from 20% to 65% while jobs for unskilled workers decreased from 60% to 15%. While policymakers and education advocates are calling for increased focus on high schools and education to meet the needs of the 21st century economy, President Bush is requesting funds that could help address these needs be significantly reduced.

The Bush Administration called for 25 percent cuts to the Perkins Act in FY 2004 and FY 2005, and proposed to completely eliminate Perkins funding in FY 2006 and FY 2007. While Congress wisely rejected these proposals in the past, the President's new proposed cuts will cause detrimental harm to the newly reauthorized program.

- Benefits of career and technical education funded through the Perkins Grant include:
- Active involvement in the learning process as well as rigorous course work developing marketable skills in students
- Demonstration of the relevance of academics in real life
- Encouragement to seek post secondary education while preparing students for immediate placement in the workforce
- Focus on a broad range of occupations, or career clusters
- A technically proficient and better prepared workforce
- Reduced drop out rates and a strengthened economy
- Incorporation of occupational skills into the broader knowledge and competencies necessary for long term success in industry
- Creation of a better workforce locally as well as national defense

If Perkins funding is cut, many Camden County students may be facing an increasingly competitive workforce with less than adequate skills. Programs offered through career and technical education are vital to closing the skills gap between high-skilled, information-based industries and the current skills of many workers. Support for CTE funding is essential to ensuring the US has a talented pool of well-trained, technically proficient Americans ready to fill the needs of our country.

Action: Work to fully fund the Carl D. Perkins Grant for career and technical education. Students who benefit from this funding source play an integral role in supporting our country's economic growth and workforce needs.