

February 26, 2008

## **ISSUE: Carl D. Perkins Act**

On February 4, 2008, President Bush released his proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2009 which includes more than \$52 billion in discretionary funding for education. Unfortunately, the president's proposed budget eliminates all funding for the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. 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.

In all, thirty six teachers at the high school and middle schools comprise Camden County School's career/technical teaching staff. 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 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Jobs, the percentage of unskilled and skilled jobs in America has 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 to meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy, President Bush has requested an elimination of funds that address these needs. The Bush Administration called for 25% cuts to the Perkins Act in FY 2004 and FY 2005, and proposed to completely eliminate Perkins funding in FY 2006 and FY 2007 and he requested funding be cut in half for 2008. While Congress wisely rejected these proposals in the past, the President's proposed elimination of the program will cause detrimental harm to a very large segment of Camden County's students.

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.

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:** We urge you to reject the Bush Administration's 2009 budget proposal and fully restore and increase funding for the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act to \$1.7 billion. Students who benefit from this funding source play an integral role in supporting our country's economic growth and workforce needs.

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