|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **For Immediate Release:** | **Contact:** [Neal Patel](mailto:neal_patel@heller.senate.gov)/[Michawn Rich](mailto:michawn_rich@heller.senate.gov) 202-224-6244 | | August 4, 2015 |   **Heller, Donnelly Work to Close the Skills Gap**  ***A year after skills gap legislation became law, Senators introduce bipartisan bill to continue the effort***  **(Washington, DC)**– Following the first anniversary of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) being signed into law, U.S. Senators Dean Heller (R-NV) and Joe Donnelly (D-IN) introduced bipartisan legislation today that requires the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to report to Congress every two years about the current state of the skills gap. According to the Department of Labor, there are approximately 5.4 million job openings in the U.S., while the national unemployment rate is 5.3 percent.  **Heller said,** “Coming from a state with one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation, it concerns me when I hear from employers that they are having difficulty finding workers with needed skill sets. The ‘skills gap’ issue has created millions of unfilled jobs throughout the United States, and I am proud to join Senator Donnelly on this critical legislation as we work to connect jobseekers with employment opportunities in in-demand sectors.”  **Donnelly said**, “After the first anniversary of bipartisan legislation being signed into law to reform our federal job training system, progress has been made, but much work still remains to close the skills gap. We need to ensure that we are training Hoosiers for the jobs that are available now, so every Hoosier who wants a job can get a job and businesses can find the skilled employees needed to compete in today’s economy. I am pleased my friend Senator Heller is joining me to introduce this legislation that would allow us to track progress made to close the skills gap and to know what is working and what still needs to be improved.  I am hopeful we will see the day when jobs compete for the same workers instead of workers competing for the same jobs.”  Heller and Donnelly’s *Biennial Report on the Skills Gap Act of 2015* would require a report from GAO on the current state of the skills gap in the United States. The biennial report would also include:   * an assessment of the effectiveness of federal efforts to close the skills gap; * policy recommendations to improve such efforts; and * an analysis of apprenticeships and on-the-job training participation and policies.   Just over a year ago, thebipartisan [WIOA, which reflects many of the priorities outlined by Heller and Donnelly in the [Skills Gap Strategy Act](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=5cb4ecfa-09e3-4933-bd30-b47fee2e9b17)](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2014/6/heller-on-wioa-essential-to-getting-americans-back-to-work), was signed into law by President Obama. WIOA seeks to improve our nation’s workforce development system by making much-needed changes to modernize and improve our job training programs across the country. The bipartisan WIOA, which is still being implemented, modernizes and supports existing job training, career development, and job search assistance programs, including the nationwide system of one-stop job centers.  ###  [http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/vendor/_skins/heller/images/newsletter/icon_fb.png](http://www.facebook.com/pages/US-Senator-Dean-Heller/325751330177) [http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/vendor/_skins/heller/images/newsletter/icon_tw.png](http://twitter.com/SenDeanHeller) [http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/vendor/_skins/heller/images/newsletter/icon_yt.png](http://www.youtube.com/user/SenDeanHeller) |