United States representatives have proposed two bills to reform and reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) to update the approaches to and requirements for adult education programs. The Workforce Investment Act of 2012 and the Workforce Investment Improvement Act of 2012 will both undergo the legislative process this year.

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) is a major topic of legislative debate in 2012. The bipartisan bill, which authorizes federal funding for adult education, was enacted in 1998 and has been continued every year since, but always with the hope that it would be reauthorized by congress with updated approaches and requirements for adult education programs.

Two important bills to reform and reauthorize WIA have been introduced this year. Each bill will progress through the committee system, and once each house passes their version there will be a conference committee to resolve the differences.

On March 20, U.S. Reps. John Tierney (MA), George Miller (CA), and Ruben Hinojosa (TX) introduced a House Democratic bill (H.R. 4227), the "Workforce Investment Act of 2012". This bill takes the bipartisan Senate WIA Draft as its starting point.

There is also a Republican version, the "Workforce Investment Improvement Act of 2012" (H.R. 4297) introduced on March 29 by Rep. Virginia Foxx (NC) on behalf of Reps. Buck McKeon (CA) and Joseph Heck (NV). Rep. Foxx chairs the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce.

The Center for Postsecondary and Economic Issues for CLASP has compiled a report comparing the two House bills. “
Refocusing Adult Education on Career and Postsecondary Success: An Analysis of Adult Education (Title II) Provisions in WIA Reauthorization Proposals

"suggests that H.R. 4227, the House Democratic bill, enhances the adult education system to better meet the longer-term, postsecondary, and employment needs of students.

WIA II was a presentation topic at the November orientation for adult education administrators hosted by CALPRO and the CDE. For background on WIA and to view information from the conference, visit the orientation website.

Also refer to OTAN Administrator's Digest, April 2012.