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COMMENTS BY: REPRESENTATIVE FRANK J. PISTELLA (PA)



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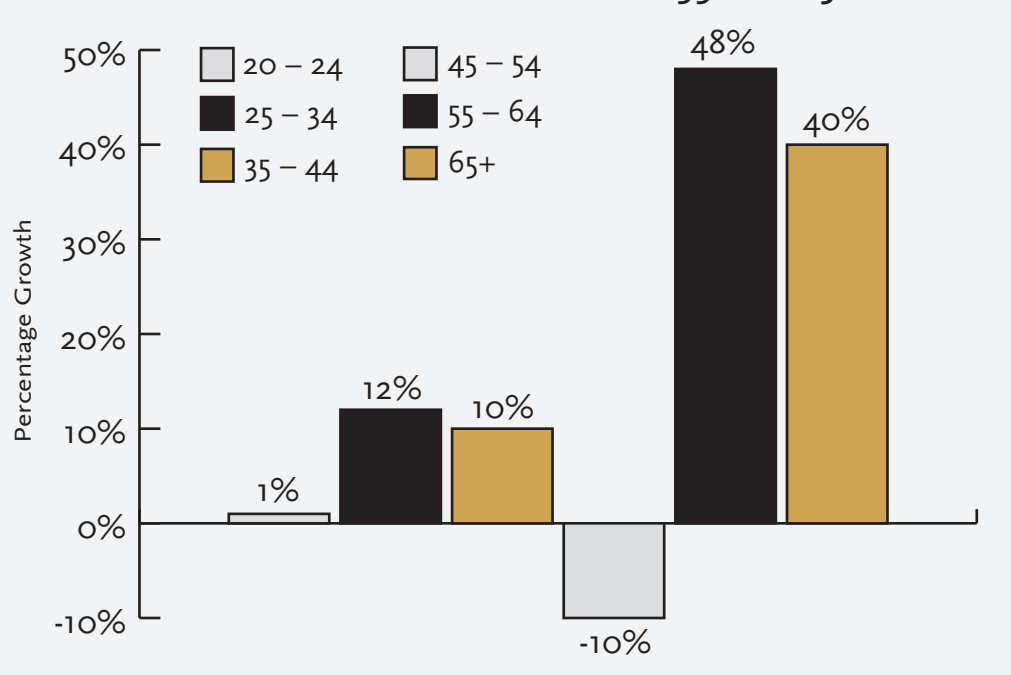
EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING FOR OLDER WORKERS

The aging of the baby boom generation and the increase in life expectancy has led to record numbers of older adults in the United States. Increasingly, older adults want or need to stay in the workforce.

Older workers comprise a diverse group of individuals with various expectations, desires and abilities. As a result, definitions of exactly who is an older worker are varied. “[T]he age at which one becomes an older worker seems not to be related to biological age but instead to concerns faced by workers at various points in their lifespans.”¹

Older workers have many reasons for remaining in the work force, including needing income or benefits and wanting to stay physically and mentally healthy. Regardless of the reasons, however, older workers are the largest growing group of employees in the labor market.

Percent Growth in Labor Force: 1998 – 2025



- “Workers ages 55 and older will be the fastest growing segment of the workforce over the next ten years.”²
- “Nearly 7 in 10 workers expect to continue to work full time or part time following retirement from their main job...Only 13% expect to stop working entirely”³
- “Given older workers’ skills and the fact that there may be relatively fewer younger workers available to take their places, older workers may become an increasingly important resource for employers.”⁴
- Older workers, and Baby Boomers in particular, may not be able to afford to retire. “Six in 10 respondents now believe they will not be able to retire from full-time work by age 60, including 12% who say they will never be able to retire.”³

Chart Source: Horrigan, M. W. (2004, February). Employment projections to 2012. *Monthly Labor Review*, 127 (2), 3-22.

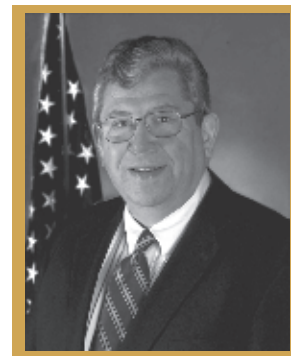
WHY ARE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER WORKERS A POLICY MATTER?

Without policies that encourage employment opportunities for older workers, states may need to provide more financial supports for older adults.

- Employers may be more likely to partner with the public sector and provide employment opportunities such as training for and rehiring of older workers if state laws rewarded them for doing so.
- Older workers who reenter the workforce can become more financially independent and have less of a need for public assistance from the state.
- A recent GAO report cited numerous reasons why employers [and the federal government] are hesitant to hire older workers, including cumbersome processes to rehire retired federal employees.⁴ State agencies that are reluctant to hire older workers may be missing an opportunity to attract talented workers to the public sector.

“RESEARCH ESTABLISHES THAT LIFELONG EDUCATION AIDS OVERALL HEALTH, PROVIDES MENTAL, PHYSICAL AND SELF-IMAGE BENEFITS, AND REDUCES OVERALL HEALTH CARE EXPENDITURES FOR OLDER ADULTS. ACCORDINGLY, I DEVELOPED LEGISLATION (H.B.481) THAT WOULD ALLOW OLDER ADULTS TO RECEIVE TUITION WAIVERS TO ATTEND COMMUNITY COLLEGES OR STATE-OWNED OR STATE-RELATED INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION. PERHAPS THE MOST VALUABLE TOOL THIS LEGISLATION WOULD PROVIDE TO OLDER ADULTS IS THE ABILITY TO RECEIVE SKILLS AVAILABLE THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION THAT WOULD ALLOW THEM TO COMPETE IN THIS CONSTANTLY CHANGING JOB MARKET. THIS IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT TO ALLEGHENY COUNTY IN WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA WHERE THE CONCENTRATION OF PERSONS 65 YEARS OLD AND OVER IS HIGHER THAN ANY OTHER COUNTY IN THE STATE AND THE NUMBER OF PERSONS WITH INCOMES BELOW THE POVERTY RATE IS HIGHER ON AVERAGE THAN THE REST OF THE STATE.”

PENNSYLVANIA STATE REPRESENTATIVE FRANK J. PISTELLA ON EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING FOR OLDER WORKERS



HOW DO EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER WORKERS AFFECT YOUR CONSTITUENTS?

Having access to employment opportunities could make a difference in the quality of life for older workers. In addition to social networks, paid employment can provide added supports for older adults.

- “[P]ersons 65 years of age and older who remain active in the labor force have higher levels of life satisfaction and morale than do retired persons in the same age cohort.”⁶
- “In general, young retirees—people age 51 to 59 who have left the work force—are not a wealthy group. They are less well-off than workers their age. People who work into their later years—those who are age 60 and older and are still in the work force—generally are wealthy relative to their nonworking peers.”⁷

WHICH OLDER WORKERS HAVE ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES?

- Some employers offer incentives, such as mentoring opportunities; however, most employers, including the federal government, still have not made widespread efforts to recruit or retain older workers.⁴
- Professional and service occupations are the most likely to have access to employment opportunities such as flexible schedules for older workers.⁴
- In 2000, about 12% of the older workers who were not working but wanted a job were enrolled in a federal employment and training program. However, training opportunities specifically geared towards older workers are less common now than they were in the past, particularly because Workforce Investment Act performance measures tend to limit older workers’ access to more in-depth training due to their part-time hours and lower earnings.⁸

HOW DO EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER WORKERS AFFECT BUSINESSES?

Employers who take steps to recruit, engage, and retain older workers may find that there are business benefits.

- Providing opportunities for older workers can help organizations retain employees with valuable skills and experience. “[M]ore than 25% of the working population will reach retirement age by 2010, resulting in a potential worker shortage of nearly 10 million.”⁹
- Employers often report that older workers are more reliable, have a stronger work ethic and offer invaluable experience to the workplace.⁹
- Older workers have a tendency to stay at their jobs longer, thus reducing costs of hiring and training new employees. “Overall (when combining the responses of older men and women), older employees exhibit significantly greater commitment to their employers (32 percent high commitment) than younger employees under 50 years old (26 percent).”¹⁰

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

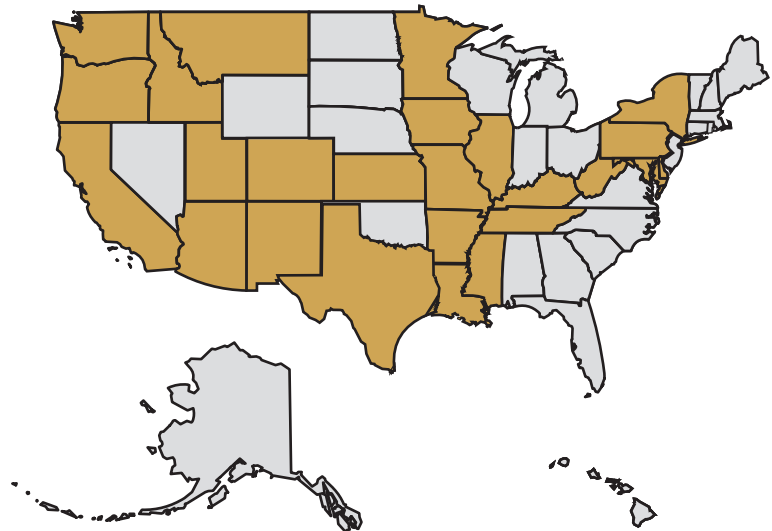
Training and job-seeking programs specifically aimed towards older workers could help those who want to return to work.

- Although older workers are just as or less likely to be laid off than younger workers, they have a more difficult time finding employment after losing a job.³
- 68% of workers believe that the “government should have programs (such as job training or career guidance) to help older workers find or keep work.”³

Innovative state policies could encourage employers and state agencies to provide more employment choices for older workers.

24 states have passed statutes related to the aging workforce.

- 15 states (CA, CO, DE, IA, IL, KS, MD, MO, MN, NM, NY, OR, PA, TN, TX) have statutes related to training opportunities and program for older workers.
- 18 states (AR, CA, CO, DE, ID, IA, KY, LA, MD, MS, MT, OR, PA, TN, TX, UT, WA, WV) have statutes related to the rehiring of retirees.
- 6 states (CA, DE, IL, NY, PA, WA) have statutes related to research or reports on the employment of older workers.
- 5 states (DE, IA, KS, OR, PA) have statutes related to economic development of older workers.



For more statutes, visit wfnetwork.bc.edu/bills.php

HAVE ANY BILLS ON EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER WORKERS BEEN RECENTLY INTRODUCED IN YOUR STATE?

FL	SB 2630	Establishes a pilot program to train economically disadvantaged older workers to provide community-based care for older adults.
	SB 1538	Establishes a pilot program to train economically disadvantaged older workers to provide community-based care for older adults.
HI	HB 2514	Recommends rehiring retirees in government positions with vacancies.
	SB 2416	Recommends rehiring retirees in government positions with vacancies.
IL	HB 3470	Requests the establishment of paid family and medical leave for workers to recover from illness or provide caregiving services.
KS	HB 2999	Provides training programs to develop an older Kansas workforce.
	SB 260	Provides access to workforce training for older Kansans.
	HCR 5037	Increases funding and support for training and retraining older job seekers.
LA	HCR 4	Requests state departments and agencies to train and mentor replacements, rehire retirees, recruit and retain quality employees, and identify and meet changing workforce needs.
MA	HB 3766	Establishes task force to increase training and resources for individuals not connected to the workforce, incumbent workers, youth ages 17 to 24, and older workers over 45 years of age.
	HB 4429	Establishes a task force to advance skills and workforce development opportunities for incumbent, unemployed and underemployed youth and adult workers.
	SB 1112	Establishes Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund to train older workers for new occupations.
	HB 3940	Establishes Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund to train older workers for new occupations.
	SB 2264	Provides funds to improve occupational skills and expand career potential for workers including older workers.
	SB 2256	Provides funds to improve occupational skills and expand career potential for workers including older workers.
NJ	AB 2529	Creates Senior Labor Task Force to study needs of older workers.
	AB 1449	Creates Senior Labor Task Force to study needs of older workers.
NY	SB 2011	Provides that Office for the Aging will report on age discrimination and retirement trends and unemployment, self-employment and partial employment of older persons.
	SB 3327	Provides that Office for the Aging will report on age discrimination and retirement trends and unemployment, self-employment and partial employment of older persons.
PA	HB 481	Provides tuition waivers for older adults at community colleges and state-owned and state-related institutions of higher education.

For more bills related to work-family issues, go to: wfnetwork.bc.edu/bills.php

WOULD YOU LIKE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER WORKERS?

The following resources about the aging workforce might also be of interest to you:

- Toosi, M. (February 2004). Labor force projections to 2010: The graying of the U.S. workforce. *Monthly Labor Review*, 127(2), 37-57.
- Moen, P. with Erickson, W., Argarwal, M., Fields, V., & Todd, L. (2000). *The Cornell Retirement and Well-Being Study* (report). Ithaca, NY: Bronfenbrenner Life Course Center at Cornell University.
- General Accounting Office. (June 2005). *Workforce Investment Act: Substantial funds are used for training, but little is known nationally about training outcomes*. Washington, DC: United States Government Accountability Office. Retrieved August 24, 2006 from: http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content_storage_01/0000000b/80/2e/1c/04.pdf

The Sloan Work and Family Research Network has written two additional PLS issues on Phased Retirement and Flexible Work Schedules. Past issues of the PLS can be accessed at: <http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/policy.php>.

Sources cited in this Policy Leadership Sheet

- 1 Rocco, T., Stein, D., & Lee, C. (June 2003). An exploratory examination of the literature on age and HRD policy development. *Human Resource Development Review*, 2(2), 155-180.
- 2 Employment Policy Foundation. (2005, October 3). Benefits for an aging workforce. *The Balancing Act Newsletter*. Washington, DC.
- 3 Reynolds, S., Ridley, N., & Van Horn, C. E. (August 2005). A work-filled retirement: Worker's changing views on employment and leisure. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development and The Center for Survey Research and Analysis, *Work Trends Survey*, 8.1. Rutgers: New Brunswick, NJ and University of Connecticut: Storrs, CT.
- 4 General Accounting Office. (December 2005). *Labor can help employers and employees plan better for the future*. Washington, DC: United States Government Accountability Office. Retrieved August 15, 2006: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/do680.pdf>
- 5 Horrigan, M. W. (2004, February). Employment projections to 2012. *Monthly Labor Review*, 127 (2), 3-22.
- 6 Aquina, J. A., Russell, D. W., Cutrona, C. E., & Altmaier, E. M. (1996). Employment status, social support, and life satisfaction among the elderly. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 43(4), 480-489.
- 7 National Academy on an Aging Society. (2000). *How financially secure are young retirees and older workers?* Retrieved August 15, 2006, from <http://agingsociety.org/agingsociety/pdf/aarp2.pdf>
- 8 General Accounting Office. (January 2003). *Older workers: Employment assistance focuses on subsidized jobs and job search, but revised performance measures could improve access to other services*. Washington, DC: General Accounting Office. Retrieved August 24, 2006 from http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content_storage_01/0000000b/80/27/f8/fi.pdf
- 9 Lockwood, N. R. (December 2003). The aging workforce: The reality of the impact of older workers and eldercare in the workplace. *HR Magazine*, 48(12).
- 10 Bond, J., Galinsky, E., Pitt-Catsouphes, M., & Smyer, M. (2005). *The diverse employment experiences of older men and women in the workforce*. Boston, MA and New York, NY: Center on Aging & Work/Workplace Flexibility and Families and Work Institute.

The Sloan Work and Family Research Network can provide you with additional research-based information about working families. VISIT WWW.BC.EDU/WFNETWORK, EMAIL WFNETWORK@BC.EDU, OR CALL 617.552.1708.