

The following is a letter to members of Kentucky's congressional delegation. Please use this information to write a letter, which best is delivered by fax to the legislators.

Senator Mitch McConnell, 202-224-2499
Representative Ed Whitfield, 202-225-3547
Representative Anne M. Northup, 202-225-5776
Representative Harold (Hal) Rogers, 202-225-0940

Senator Jim Bunning, 202-228-1373
Representative Ron Lewis, 202-226-2019
Representative Geoff Davis, 202-225-0003
Representative Ben Chandler, 202-225-2122

February 14, 2005

The Honorable Name
United States Senate or House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510 or 20515

The Kentucky Association for Career and Technical Education (KACTE) extends its sincere thanks for the past support of Kentucky's congressional delegation for Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. Reauthorizations of the Carl Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act and appropriations to fund those programs are important in maintaining a strong CTE program in the Commonwealth. The federal law establishes benchmarks and accountability, and the federal funding spurs local initiatives. This has resulted in significant program improvements over the last few years benefiting Kentuckians at all levels, particularly the students who are prepared for high-tech, high-demand jobs and the businesses who can improve their productivity by hiring CTE graduates.

For these reasons, KACTE respectfully opposes the Administration's budget proposal that would eliminate the Perkins Act and move the funding toward a general high school academic initiative. Without the direction and oversight of the Perkins Act, and the innovations and improvements stimulated by federal funds, KACTE believes schools driven by academic accountability standards will ignore the needs of a large segment of students. The Bush Administration's proposal denies the gains in Kentucky and other states that have integrated high academic rigor into CTE programs. CTE is not a broken system.

Career and Technical Education in Kentucky is demonstrating success:

- From 2001-2004, high school CTE Concentrators (students taking four or more courses in one CTE area) gained 9.3 points in the CATS (Commonwealth Accountability and Testing System) academic index compared to a 6.8 gain for all other high school students.
- In 2004, more than 13,000 students participated in industry-recognized Occupational Skill Standards assessments. From 2000-2004, the percentage of participants achieving a skill standards certificate increased from 14 percent to 40 percent. The skill standards assessment covers 19 occupational areas.
- The Kentucky Community and Technical College System continues to report record enrollments as students seek to improve their skills for the workforce.
- More than 250,000 students are enrolled in CTE programs at all levels. More than 61,000 Kentucky students – from middle school, through high school and area technology centers, to community and technical colleges – belong to Career and Technical Education Student Organizations (CTSOs), where they learn real-world application of skills and demonstrate leadership ability.

Career and Technical Education is critical for economic security:

- More than 65 percent of all jobs in Kentucky – the jobs that make things, build things, fix things, grow food and provide health care, banking and other services – are filled by Career and Technical Education graduates. Without a skilled workforce, business and industry will not expand or relocate in Kentucky. Kentucky's Career and Technical Education System is enhancing the opportunity to attract new and maintain existing jobs.
- In 2001, the Russell Sage Foundation found that Career and Technical Education graduates are 10-15 percent more likely to be in the labor force and earn 8-9 percent more than graduates of academic programs. The reason is the educational programs combine high levels of academic rigor with real-world applications so the students are able to enter the workforce better equipped to succeed at today's high-tech, high-demand jobs.
- The 2004 National Assessment of Vocational Education report noted employment growth in occupations requiring a vocational associate's degree will more than double the overall employment growth through 2008.
- A 1998 University of Michigan study determined that high-risk students are 8-10 times less likely to drop out in the 11th and 12th grades if they enroll in Career and Technical Education rather than a general program.
- In 2002, the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago reported that a year of technically oriented coursework at a community college increased men's earnings by 14 percent and women's earnings by 29 percent. The same study reported almost no earnings increase of non-technically oriented coursework.

Thank you for your consideration of these points, which KACTE believes demonstrate the critical importance of the Perkins Act and the necessity of federal funding for those programs. KACTE asks your support in reauthorizing a viable Career and Technical Education program and maintaining adequate funding for those programs. Please support this continued success by rejecting the Administration's attempt to eliminate programs that are demonstrating effectiveness; programs that are critically important to Kentucky students. Please let me know whether I can provide more information or answer any questions.

Sincerely,
Sarah Raikes
President, KACTE

(NOTE: It always is beneficial to include a local anecdote of success, which helps relate real-world experience.)