



# National Coalition For Literacy

## **Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Appropriations**

### **What is Adult Education?**

Adult education is an education program serving adults, 16 years of age and older, who are functioning below the high school completion level with emphasis on READING, NUMERACY, AND ENGLISH LITERACY. Adult educators work with each adult student to design an individual learning plan that responds to the student's needs and goals: e.g., to get a job; to help their children with homework and be successful in school; to get off welfare and achieve a family sustaining income; to learn the English language, understand US culture, and participate in society; to complete high school or obtain a GED; and/or to transfer to the community college or other training and education programs.

### **What is the Need for Adult Education?**

There are two measures of need;

1. Of the 200,000,000 adults in America, 43,000,000 have not finished high school (US Census)
2. Of the 200,000,000 adults in America, 93,000,000 (45% of the adult population) function below the high school level (National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) –NCES 2005)

### **How Effective Are Adult Education Programs?**

During the previous Administration, OMB rated adult education as “Effective”—its highest rating. A review of state data also demonstrates the effectiveness of adult education in serving those in need of assistance. Adult Education is a good investment.

### **Why is Adult Education So Important?**

Because 45% of the adult population has basic skills deficiencies, adult education services are important to many sectors of society, including:

- Business: American businesses lose more than \$60 BILLION in productivity each year due to employees' basic skill deficiencies (NIFL). Furthermore, new jobs require advanced skills. Public schools produce ONLY 2% of the workforce annually. Ninety eight percent of the annual workforce members are adults.
- Children's Education: Children of parents who are unemployed and have not completed high school are five times more likely to drop out than children of employed parents. Children's literacy levels are strongly linked to the educational level of their parents, especially their mother. Adult education prepares parents to be their child's first and most important teacher.
- Public Health: 46% of American adults can not read and follow medical instructions (AMA). According to the NAAL, senior citizens have the most difficulty.
- Corrections: Participation in correctional education reduces re-arrest, re-convictions, and re-incarceration.
- Immigrants: Only 1.5 million of the twenty million limited English speakers can access adult English language and literacy instruction.
- Learning Disabled: 50% of adults without a high school diploma are learning disabled

### **What is the Current Budget Situation?**

- The current federal appropriation (\$571,000,000) coupled with state and local funds (\$1.6 Billion) allow ONLY 3% of the 93,000,000 to access classes and other services.

**What is the Impact?**

Undereducated adults limit the success of many federal initiatives including job training, keeping our nation competitive, improving the academic achievement of our nation's children, providing alternatives for incarcerated individuals, improving the health of our nation's citizens, and helping individuals obtain the skills they require to obtain a job and end their dependency on federal programs. The RETURN ON INVESTMENT in adult education is significant.

**What should Congress do?**

Congress should increase access to adult education and literacy services over the next four years from 2.5 million to:

- 5 million served in 2010-2011
- 7 ½ million served in 2011-2012
- 10 million served in 2012-2013
- 12 ½ million served in 2013-2014