



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## Senator Kennedy Fighting to Improve Community's Access to State's Job-Training Programs

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY February 12, 2014

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*Kennedy seeks to address troubling trend of area residents not knowing about state's job-training programs; Wants Department of Labor to provide services directly in Buffalo neighborhoods.*

*Kennedy is pushing state DOL to establish satellite offices, drop-in hours at community centers and outreach events in targeted areas.*

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Senator Tim Kennedy, D-Buffalo, is seeking to address a troubling trend he has observed during meetings with constituents throughout Western New York – that is, the

state has fallen short in spreading awareness of job-training programs available to area residents. Kennedy is calling on the New York State Department of Labor to make their job-training and workforce-development programs more easily accessible in neighborhoods throughout Western New York. This will ensure local workers have direct access to the training programs necessary to secure the new jobs opening up in our recovering economy.

In recent years, the state has made significant investments in job creation and economic development – most visibly, Governor Andrew Cuomo’s Buffalo Billion initiative. Kennedy has been fighting to ensure the state provides needed resources to train Western New Yorkers for the new jobs generated through state investments.

While the state has taken steps to strengthen its workforce-development programs, Kennedy has found that far too many people have never heard of the programs the state offers – and even those who do know about training opportunities available to them face obstacles, such as a lack of transportation or work obligations during regular DOL business hours, that impede their access to necessary information and career support.

“Whenever I’m out in the community talking to folks, I’ll hear from people who are looking for work. The state offers job-training programs that might help them, but too often, constituents tell me they’ve never heard about Advance Buffalo, New York Youth Works, the On-the-Job Training Program, Green Careers NY or any of the other programs the state provides,” said Senator Tim Kennedy. “This lack of public awareness sheds light on the need for the Department of Labor to make workforce-development resources more accessible to people who need them. The state must address this problem immediately, and it should start by setting up satellite offices, establishing drop-in hours at community centers and engaging in better-targeted outreach.

“New York State has invested heavily in the economic revival of Buffalo and Western New York,” Kennedy added. “As new jobs are created, the state must ensure workers in our community are trained and ready to take advantage of those jobs. With the Department of Labor’s support, we will help more workers get the training they need to secure good-paying jobs and speed the recovery of our community’s economy.”

Kennedy wants the state Department of Labor to set up accessible satellite offices, establish drop-in hours at designated community sites, hold more widely publicized outreach events in targeted areas and conduct more effective, on-the-ground awareness campaigns. Kennedy is also pushing the state to provide additional funding to ensure local DOL offices have the resources necessary to work remotely or establish separate service centers in communities that would most benefit from having direct access to job-training programs. Kennedy believes DOL should immediately build working partnerships with community groups to help spread the word about available resources and programming.

Senator Kennedy recently held a community meeting on Buffalo’s West Side. At the meeting, constituents raised concerns about the awareness and accessibility of the state’s training initiatives and workforce programs. Kennedy has now turned the community’s concerns into action. With the support of West Side residents, Kennedy is urging the state Department of Labor to embark on new efforts that will ensure people who are in need of their services know what’s available to them and how to access it.

As a result of Kennedy’s ongoing efforts, the state DOL has connected with PUSH Buffalo and is working toward providing some workforce-development services out of their offices on Buffalo’s West Side. Kennedy wants DOL to fully commit to the effort and partner with PUSH for the long-term. He also wants DOL to form partnerships and provide accessible services at additional locations in Buffalo and Western New York, as well as in communities across the state.

Aaron Bartley, Executive Director of PUSH Buffalo, said, "PUSH applauds the Senator's efforts to bring job placement and training resources directly into our communities. We look forward to working with him to expand the effort to neighborhoods across the city."

Senator Kennedy is also encouraging the Department of Labor to create new accountability measures that will allow them to track the success of their service-delivery efforts. Kennedy believes the community deserves to know that their investment in job training is paying off to the benefit of their neighbors who are looking for new jobs or to advance their careers.

A copy of Senator Kennedy's can be read below or [viewed at this link](#).

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*Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate's 63rd District, which is comprised of the towns of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and nearly all of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.*

FULL TEXT OF SENATOR KENNEDY'S LETTER TO DEPARTMENT OF LABOR:

February 11, 2014

Peter M. Rivera

Commissioner

NYS Department of Labor

Building 12, W.A. Harriman Campus

Albany, NY 12240

Dear Commissioner Rivera,

I write to bring to your attention to an opportunity to expand employment and workforce training opportunities in the Buffalo area. After speaking with residents and advocacy

groups, I kept hearing the same refrain that New York State's workforce training programs are an excellent idea, but people don't know how to get involved. Residents and groups believe that if the Department of Labor were willing to go directly into neighborhoods and hold satellite office hours, local participation in Buffalo would show a marked increase.

I believe the Department of Labor should immediately expand their outreach and engagement efforts and work directly in the neighborhoods where workforce training programs would make the largest possible impact. The state has made a billion-dollar commitment to help create jobs in Buffalo and Western New York; now we need to ensure local residents have access to the necessary training programs to take advantage of those new jobs.

Recently, Governor Cuomo announced over \$800,000 in workforce training funding in Western New York through the Regional Economic Development Council. Following this, my office fielded a large number of calls from constituents who were eager to take advantage of these programs. Many people who are in need of this training may not have the means to seek out the locations where they can receive it. By having a DOL representative available and DOL programs accessible in their neighborhood, they will be able to speak with someone who is well-versed in various workforce training programs without having to travel long distances.

I know there are groups throughout the area, in neighborhoods in Buffalo, Cheektowaga and Lackawanna, that would be willing to provide space for a DOL representative to set up a satellite office or to periodically hold outreach events from. I am happy to help you and your staff by facilitating any meetings with local groups that may be needed, and stand ready to offer any other assistance you may require. I believe this simple solution would empower numerous residents struggling with unemployment to receive the training they need and put them on the path to a steady long-term career.

I look forward to working with you and your department on this important matter. If I may be of assistance or if you have any questions, please contact me at [716.826.2683](tel:716.826.2683).

Sincerely,

Timothy M. Kennedy

New York State Senator, 63rd District