



Increase Funding for Adult Education (2/1/21)

Background and Key Statistics

Adult education refers to the system for delivering foundational skills to adults in the U.S.. This includes adult ESOL (English for speakers of other languages), along with high school equivalency, basic literacy, and numeracy ([World Ed](#)).

The U.S. lags behind many other countries in these skills ([NCES](#)), meaning that many adults lack the skills they need to thrive. Adult education is badly needed but severely underfunded:

- Waiting lists for adult education are common in all 50 states.
- 40 million adults struggle with low literacy, but federally supported programs can serve only 2 million.
- The U.S. spends only \$1,021 per adult learner, compared to \$13,814 per student in K-12 education ([World Ed](#)).
- Around five million U.S. jobs remain unfilled due to "a lack of available skilled workers." ([ProLiteracy](#))

Research demonstrates that adult education is a good investment with a strong return on investment:

- Adults who participate in adult education programs "have higher future earnings as a result of participating" ([Reder 2014](#))

Current Situation

The Biden administration is working with Congress to develop their COVID-19 relief package as part of the FY2022 federal budget request. Senator Reed's (RI) office is circulating a letter to Senate colleagues laying out the importance of adult education and urging President Biden to include a \$1 billion investment in adult ed. ([TESOL](#), [COABE](#)).

PennTESOL East is asking you to contact your Senators and ask them to sign onto this letter today.

Action Steps

Contact your U.S. Senators:

- encourage them to sign onto Senator Reed's letter
- emphasize the importance and impact of adult education
- emphasize that adult education is a bipartisan issue
- share stories about the impact of adult education.

Pennsylvania's U.S. Senators:

Bob Casey Jr. (D)			Pat Toomey (R)		
<p>"Adult education and literacy programs play an important role in providing adults with the skills they need to have successful careers. Equally important, children benefit when their parents have the literacy skills to read to their children and help with their schoolwork, making adult education beneficial to the whole family."</p> <p style="text-align: right;">2011 statement</p>			<p>"Senator Toomey voted for the bipartisan Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The legislation, which was signed into law by President Obama in 2014, modernizes America's federal worker training programs, reduces administrative burdens, and provides additional flexibility so States can provide the best possible services to workers!"</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Sen. Toomey's website</p>		
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