

New push to fund apprenticeship programs

By Kellie Meyer | Posted: Mon 5:30 PM, Aug 22, 2016 | Updated: Mon 5:31 PM, Aug 22, 2016

WASHINGTON (Gray DC) -- Tim Kaine on the campaign trail Monday in Las Vegas, NV. He spoke at an Ironworkers Conference and promoted something he cares deeply about; apprenticeships. It's an issue Kaine has been working on since before he became a Vice Presidential nominee.



"So often in American education we don't consider apprenticeships as valid as you know like, the college degree," Kaine said.

The Virginia Senator said apprenticeships have a major hurdle to overcome in terms of gaining popularity among American job seekers. Kaine and a group of bipartisan Senators believe they have a solution; the Earns Act, which would invest \$100 million of federal money into apprenticeship programs.

"Give the department of labor more tools to expand these programs, make sure there is funding there for them," Kaine added.

There's all types of apprenticeships, nursing, engineering and even journalism. Kaine said they give people on the job training combined with classroom instruction, supplying them with the skills they need to land that first job.

"The real barrier of the cost of apprenticeship is the business and they struggle with that," Scott Christman, research fellow with the American Apprenticeship Round Table.

The American Apprenticeship Round Table is an organization that has been promoting apprenticeships in the US for about 75 years. Christman said the Earns Act is a step in the right direction but he wants to make sure the federal offices responsible for distributing the money are getting it to those who need it.

"We need a climate that welcomes and pushes our education system to partner with industry and individual industry clusters in a way they have never done before," Christman said.

He added it costs the business about 15,000 dollars per apprentice per year. So any extra money would help get these programs up and running. But for now the bill remains in committee.

Sen. Collins (R-ME), Frankin (D-MN) and Scott (R-SC) are all cosponsors on the EARNS Act.

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