

## Trump touts apprenticeship initiative, Durbin talks of job crisis

By Chuck Raasch

WASHINGTON • President Donald Trump said Monday he'll announce an initiative later this week aimed at getting technical training apprenticeships for people without college degrees.

"The apprenticeships. A very good word from the Trump standpoint, the word 'apprentice'," he said during a cabinet meeting on Monday, and that reference to Trump's NBC reality show of that name drew laughs from around the table. "Apprenticeships are going to be a big, big factor in our country."

The question: Will they be a factor for those not only without a college degree, which Trump said is an important labor-market sector to address, but for those without a high school diploma?

Simultaneously with Trump's comments in the White House, Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., and others were holding an event in Chicago focusing on the dismal job prospects of those without a high school degree. Durbin and Chicago-area officials released a report by the University of Illinois-Chicago's Great Cities Institute that said that the U.S. treasury will lose an estimated \$9.5 billion in future tax revenue from current jobless people in Illinois who have no high school degree.

Trump will visit the Department of Labor Wednesday to tout the initiative. "Americans want to work," Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta told reporters on Monday. He said there are 360,000 job vacancies in manufacturing and 200,000 in construction.

Acosta said the administration would try to expand the number of apprenticeships beyond the current level, which is about 3 percent of the current workforce. Trump, he said, is "very familiar" with apprenticeships through his work with construction through the years.

The Trump initiative through the Labor De-



U.S. Secretary of Labor Alexander Acosta, left, shakes hands with Rodney Tschirhart, right, who has 41-years of service with Milton after meeting Kenneth Jaynes, center, who has 39 years of service with company, Thursday, June 1 2017, in Detroit. Acosta discussed how to better prepare American workers for careers in advanced manufacturing. Milton Manufacturing is a woman-owned business that provides metal and fabric solutions for the defense, automotive, aerospace, heavy truck, rail, agriculture and energy industries. (Todd McInturf/Detroit News via AP)

partment comes in the wake of several other more controversial initiatives. Acosta has decided to let go through, for now, a "fiduciary rule" that would require financial advisers to put the interests of clients first that is opposed by many Republicans, including Reps. Ann Wagner, R-Ballwin, and Blaine Luetkemeyer, R-St. Elizabeth, who have been vocal opponents from their positions on the House Financial Services Committee.

Critics have also pointed out that so far, the Trump administration has not committed to spending any more for apprenticeship programs than the \$90 million spent by President Barack Obama, and that it is proposing to cut other government labor-market initiatives.

Acosta told reporters that the Trump administration would push for more private initiatives in this and other labor-market develop-

ment programs, saying that simply spending money on something doesn't make it better. He used, as an example, the possibility of encouraging more apprenticeship programs to be twinned with people getting college degrees, citing the case of a former student who wanted to be a police officer but got a college degree without being qualified for it.

"Stay tuned for the announcement," Acosta said.

**On Monday** Durbin and others who gathered for a press conference in Chicago painted a grim picture for job possibilities for young people without a high school diploma. Cook County is the epicenter of what could be long-term economic problems in this subgroup, according to [the report](#). That county alone has more than 21,000 people aged 16-24 who don't have a job or a high school diploma, the report said. That's

nearly half – 44 percent – of all the people that age without a degree in the entire state of Illinois, according to the study.

“The best anti-poverty, anti-crime, anti-violence program is a job,” Durbin said.

Durbin and others at the press conference pointed out that many of the chronically employed in this minimally educated age group are technically not included in the national unemployment figures because they have given up looking for work.

Durbin and Trump haven’t agreed on much since the president took office, but they do on that point. Here is what the president said in his cabinet meeting on Monday:

“While we have the lowest number in terms of unemployment in many many years at the same time I have always argued with that number because it doesn’t take into account the millions and millions of people who have given up looking for jobs. And we are going to be doing something about that and we are going to be getting those people back to work.”

“I call them the forgotten men and women,” Trump said. “But they are not going to be forgotten much longer.”

He then touted the upcoming announcement, potentially later this week, on an apprenticeship initiative by his administration.

**On the web:** <https://greatcities.uic.edu/2017/06/12/the-high-costs-for-out-of-school-and-jobless-youth-in-chicago-and-cook-county/> UIC report on employment among people without a high school degree.

**By the numbers:**

48,108 – Number of jobless Illinois residents who don’t have a high school diploma, according to the UIC study.

\$197,055 – What an employed person in that above cohort would pay in federal income taxes over his or her lifetime if employed, according to the report.

\$9.5 billion – The loss on the federal treasury from Illinois alone if none of those in that group of more than 48,000 never becomes employed.

**They said it:**

There are “millions of good jobs that lead to great careers” that do not require four-year

university degrees and those people avoid “the massive debt that often comes with those four-year degrees.” – President Donald Trump on the need for better apprenticeship programs in the U.S.