



Committee: House Education & Workforce Subcommittee on Workforce Protections
Event: [Building an AI-Ready America: Understanding AI's Economic Impact on Workers and Employers](#)
Date: April 15, 2026

Executive Summary:

On April 15, 2026, the House Education & Workforce Subcommittee on Workforce Protections held a hearing to examine the risks and benefits that artificial intelligence (AI) offers to workers and employers, as well as the possible legislative solutions that Congress.

- Bipartisan discussions focused on how best to balance AI regulation with international cooperation, in addition to the need for expanded data collection to better inform Congress about AI's impacts on the workplace.
- Republicans advocated for regulatory restraint to promote American innovation and competitiveness, with emphasis on securing important supply chains and eliminating complicated compliance burdens.
- Democrats criticized Republicans for failing to prioritize “meaningful” AI regulation and emphasized the need for stronger worker protections and union rights to ensure employees are included in important conversations about AI.

Member Toplines:

[Chair Ryan Mackenzie \(R-PA-07\)](#): Mackenzie stressed that AI's enhanced efficiency has elevated the global economy and empowered small businesses to compete on a larger scale. He warned that inconsistent state-level regulations risked burdening businesses and hindering innovation, which would leave the U.S. behind its heavily AI-invested global competitors. He called for a balanced, evidence-backed federal strategy that both enabled responsible AI development and practical safeguards to protect workers and the public.

*Ranking Member Ilhan Omar (D-MN-05)*¹: Omar argued that the Committee's continued focus on AI had come at the expense of more immediate issues, while failing to produce concrete legislative protections for workers. She contended that recent AI developments risk exacerbating economic inequality and enabling worker exploitation. She commended labor unions and several state governments for implementing safeguards necessary to protect workers from AI-related harms, while criticizing the Trump administration's efforts to undermine state-level AI regulations and weaken the federal agencies responsible for protecting workers.

Witness Toplines:

[Chatrane Birbal, Senior Vice President, CHRO Association](#): Birbal argued that AI is most effectively when it supplements human judgement. She emphasized that leading employers

¹ Ranking Member Omar's opening remarks were unavailable at the time of this memo's distribution

view AI as a workforce transformation effort and have invested in training and collaboration to ensure employees help shape its use. She pointed to practical workplace applications as evidence that AI can benefit businesses while creating more meaningful work for employees. Birbal maintained that existing labor laws are sufficient and cautioned that overly protective, AI-specific regulations could add complexity and hinder innovation.

[Matthew Gizzo, Shareholder, Ogletree Deakins](#): Gizzo urged Congress to take a measured regulatory approach to avoid undermining AI's proven benefits. He stated that AI tools can improve accuracy and efficiency across key business functions, reducing most unintentional violations that are not made in bad faith. He stressed the benefits of AI for both employers and employees and maintained that policymakers should pursue a balanced framework that supports AI innovation while minimizing compliance burdens.

[Sara Steffens, Worker Power Director, We Build Progress](#): Steffens acknowledged the risks posed by the rapid expansion for AI, arguing that AI-enabled surveillance has significantly increased employers' ability to monitor and retaliate against workers. She maintained that current enforcement mechanisms are insufficient to protect workers against AI-related harms in the workplace. She emphasized the critical role of labor unions in giving workers a direct voice in how AI is implemented and called for stronger labor laws, increased funding for enforcement agencies, and new policies requiring transparency and accountability in workplace AI use.

[Rachel Greszler, Senior Research Fellow, Advancing American Freedom](#): Greszler argued that AI's speed and adaptability makes it difficult to obtain the reliable data needed to fully understand its impact on workers and the broader economy. She warned that without such information, lawmakers risk crafting ineffective or misguided policies that either lag behind emerging developments or unnecessarily constrain innovation. She proposed expanding federal data collection and emphasized that a data-driven approach is essential to balancing innovation with worker protections and maintaining U.S. leadership in AI.

Major Takeaways:

- Chair Mackenzie and Rep. **Tim Walberg** (R-MI-05) raised concerns that a growing patchwork of state and local AI regulations could create inconsistent compliance requirements, hinder innovation, and reduce U.S. competitiveness.
 - Birbal advocated for a federal, principles-based framework that would preempt conflicting state laws and create consistent AI standards.
 - Greszler recommended a measured approach focused on improving data collection, applying existing laws before creating new ones, and addressing specific harms rather than imposing broad regulations.
- Reps. **Randy Fine** (R-FL-06) and **Mark Messmer** (R-IN-08) worried that overregulation could allow adversaries like China to outpace the U.S and highlighted the importance of a pro-innovation federal AI strategy.
 - Greszler argued that the U.S. should aim to lead in the development of trustworthy AI across both public and private sectors, pointing to existing frameworks like the *National AI Initiative Act of 2020* as models.

- Omar raised concerns about the growing use of AI-enabled workplace surveillance, the risks associated with extensive data collection, and whether AI could be used to facilitate illegal labor practices.
 - Steffens warned that workers have minimal privacy protections and that AI-driven data collection creates an urgent need for federal data use standards. She cautioned that such data could be sold or shared through third-party brokers, potentially influencing hiring decisions. She noted that while these violations are illegal, AI can make them harder to detect.
- Omar argued that current labor protections are insufficient to ensure accountability and asked how they could be strengthened.
 - Steffens pointed to enforcement agencies, including the U.S. Department of Labor and the National Labor Relations Board, and called for increased funding alongside new privacy safeguards.
- Rep. **Greg Casar** (D-TX-35) warned that AI could significantly raise unemployment and criticized Republicans for focusing on deregulation rather than worker protections. He claimed that political inaction was influenced by significant financial backing from the AI industry and suggested that large-scale political spending efforts from AI companies had shaped the agenda toward limiting regulation rather than protecting workers.
- Walberg and Messmer highlighted the importance of better labor market data to understand AI's impact on work, particularly at the task level rather than just job counts.
 - Greszler asserted that improved data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics could help guide workforce decisions and policy responses while mitigating fears of widespread job loss.
 - Fine argued that undercounting of gig and independent workers could undermine efforts to understand AI's impact on the workforce
- Rep. **Glenn Grothman** (R-WI-06) raised concerns about workforce shifts, particularly the potential displacement of white-collar jobs, and argued that cultural biases undervalue higher-paying blue-collar work.
 - Greszler suggested that many white-collar workers are adaptable and that large-scale job disruption may occur more gradually than many people fear.
- Grothman questioned how to address bias in AI systems while respecting free speech principles.