

**EXPAND APPRENTICESHIP OPPORTUNITIES**

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**TOPLINE:** Apprenticeships should be freed from red tape and union protectionism so that they can expand into new occupations, providing more opportunities and higher incomes.

**BACKGROUND:** Apprenticeships are a proven pathway for people to gain on-the-job education for successful careers while receiving paychecks instead of paying tuition. Unfortunately, the federal Registered Apprenticeship Program, which was two pages of law in 1937, now spans hundreds of pages of regulations, guidance, forms, and other requirements. This red tape has prevented apprenticeships from expanding outside the male- and union-dominated trades. A 2017 [Harvard study estimated](#) that the number of occupations commonly filled through apprenticeships could nearly triple, jobs filled through apprenticeships could expand eightfold, and apprenticeship wages could be 20% higher.

In 2017, the Trump-Pence administration created an [Industry Recognized Apprenticeship Program](#) (IRAP) to open new apprenticeship doors and better align them with industry needs. Within a few years, about [130 IRAPs](#) were created with many focused on developing workers for the nursing profession. Despite the promise of IRAPs, the [Biden administration canceled them](#) and instead issued hundreds of pages of proposed new apprenticeship regulations. Congress should codify apprenticeship expansions to reduce education costs, increase incomes, and reduce prices for goods and services that could be produced by apprenticeship graduates.

**Action Items (Congress and the Administration):**

- Congress and the administration should [allow new types](#) of **industry-led apprenticeships** to develop **without the red tape** of registered apprenticeship programs.

**How It Would Make Life More Affordable:**

- Apprenticeships offer paid education instead of six-figure tuition costs.
- Untapped occupations ripe for apprenticeships pay higher wages.
- By providing targeted and timely education, apprenticeships can reduce price increases in high-demand fields like health care and construction.

**Related Legislation:** Training America's Workforce Act ([S. 1213 \[118<sup>th</sup> Congr.\]](#)); Apprenticeship Freedom Act ([H.R. 8178 \[118<sup>th</sup> Congr.\]](#)); Reducing Arbitrary Barriers to Apprenticeship Act of 2026 ([S. 3993](#)).

**BOTTOMLINE:** Removing government barriers to new apprenticeships would drastically reduce education costs, open more pathways to successful and in-demand careers, and reduce price increases for consumers.