**H.R.52**

**Jobs, On-the-Job 'Earn While You Learn' Training, and Apprenticeships for**

**African-American Young Men Act Policy Analysis**

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**Historical Analysis**

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            Historically, men of color have not had the same employment opportunities as the basic white male or female. According to an article written for Center of American Progress, “For blacks, the American experience began with slavery, which allowed whites to profit off the bodies and blood of enslaved people, who by rule of law were unable to live freely, let alone build wealth to pass along to future generations. More than one and a half centuries since slavery’s abolition, America has yet to fully reckon with how to atone for this original sin” (Hanks, Solomon, & Weller, 2018). Since the foundation of American, people of color, especially men have not been paid the wages they deserved and, in some instances, such as slavery, they were paid nothing at all.

This policy would not right any historical wrongs, but it would help to build the probability of livable wages for men of color. Wealth may be far-fetched due to wealth having to be accumulated over time, an increase in income would at the very least allow families of color to live today with the hope of leaving something for future generations to live from tomorrow.

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            According to Hanks, et al. (2018), “Decade after decade, black Americans have struggled to keep pace with their white counterparts and—despite momentous effort—continuously find themselves several steps behind. The data are clear: Even when African Americans pursue higher education, purchase a home, or secure a good job, they still lag behind their white counterparts in terms of wealth” (Hanks, Solomon, & Weller, 2018).

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            Previously, the problem had been handled by Affirmative Action which was implemented under President Kennedy in 196. Kennedy’s Executive Order stated, “"The contractor will take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and that employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, creed, color, or national origin." (Cornell Law School, 2018) This was supposed to be the beginning of the end of discriminatory practices related to employment but, it was not. Affirmative Action ideal continued to evolve and the following additions were made:

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•  The Equal Employment Opportunity commission, created by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, enforces the following employment anti-discrimination laws: (source: EEOC).

•  Equal Pay Act of 196

•  Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (race, color, religion, national origin)

•  Civil Rights Act of 1991 (Cornell Law School, 2018)

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More provisions had to be made because although accountability in the form of Affirmative Action was established, it did not stop employers from discriminating, they just found different ways.

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This policy originated on 01/03/2017

01/03/2017 - Introduced in House

Action By: House of Representatives

01/03/17 - Referred to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce.

Action By: House of Representatives

**Description of the problem that necessitated the policy**

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The nature of the problem is, “Congress finds that:

(1) African-American young men ages 18 to 39 are the hardest hit in unemployment, with an unemployment rate of 41 percent nationally, and in some States and cities, especially inner cities, higher than 50 percent;

(2) this extraordinarily high unemployment rate has a terrible rippling impact on the breakdown of the family structure, as men in this age group are in the primary child-producing ages; and

(3) an unemployment rate of 40 to 50 percent among African-American young men, many of who are fathers who, without jobs, and are unable to provide for their families, is not only a national crisis but a national tragedy. (Congress.gov, 2018)

The issue of unemployment for men (people) of color lay in employment practices and implicit biases as well as downright discrimination. This policy will help to address the problem by mandating employers to open their doors to men of color.

**Description of the policy**

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            The policy is intended to, “To rebuild the Nation’s crumbling infrastructure, transportation systems, technology and computer networks, and energy distribution systems, by strongly and urgently requesting the immediate recruitment, employment, and on-the-job “earn as you learn” training of African-American young men ages 18 to 39, who are the hardest hit in terms of unemployment, with an unemployment rate of 41 percent nationally, and in some States and cities, especially inner cities, higher than 50 percent, which is a national crisis” (Congress.gov, 2017).

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            The policy will work by “securing jobs, on-the-job training, and apprenticeships for African-American young men ages 18 to 39 with the labor unions, general contractors, and businesses who will rebuild the Nation’s crumbling infrastructure in cities and communities throughout the Nation” (Congress.gov, 2017) It was also stated that, “Labor unions, contractors, and businesses involved with such infrastructure or systems must recruit by seeking assistance from the African American community, churches, the National Urban League, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 100 Black Men of America, high school and college job placement offices, and media outlets” (Congress.gov, 2017)

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            The way this policy will be structured and implemented is:

“The Secretary of Labor shall strongly and urgently request those labor unions, general contractors, and businesses, who will rebuild the Nation’s crumbling infrastructure, transportation systems, technology and computer networks, and energy distribution systems, to actively recruit, hire, and provide on-the-job training to African-American young men ages 18 to 39 through their existing jobs, apprenticeships, and “earn while you learn” programs. The Secretary shall provide assistance to such labor unions, general contractors, and businesses through every means available to help coordinate the recruitment of such individuals for such jobs, on-the-job training, and apprenticeships’ (Congress.gov, 2017)

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            “The jobs, on-the-job training, and apprenticeships made available by labor unions, general contractors, and businesses described in subsection (a) shall be conducted in conjunction with the Secretary of Labor and the labor unions and other associations which have been identified as those primarily involved in the infrastructure rebuilding described in such subsection, including the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada, the International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers Union, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, the National Electrical Contractors Association, the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART), the Laborers’ International Union of North America (LIUNA), the International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE), and the United Steelworkers (USW). Such coordination shall also be done in conjunction with the National Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee, which allows apprentices to earn while they learn” (Congress.gov, 2017)

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            “The labor unions, general contractors, and businesses described in subsections (a) and (b) shall recruit African-American young men for the jobs, on-the-job training, and apprenticeships described in subsection (a) by reaching out and seeking assistance from within the African-American community, churches, the National Urban League, the NAACP, 100 Black Men of America, high school and college job placement offices, media outlets, and other African-American organizations that can offer valuable assistance to the Secretary of Labor, the labor unions, general contractors, and businesses with identifying, locating, and contacting unemployed African-American young men who want jobs, on-the-job training, and apprenticeships. These African-American organizations have a long and rich history of working to improve the lives of African-Americans, and can be very helpful in successfully reaching, contacting, and recruiting unemployed African-American young men” (Congress.gov, 2017).

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            The reasoning and outcome of this policy as described on Congress.gov is

(1) while rebuilding the crumbling infrastructure of this great Nation, will simultaneously help create good paying jobs and job training that will provide African-American young men ages 18 to 39 with the technical skills, computer capabilities, and other skills necessary in this high technology-driven job market, thus providing African-American young men with highly developed skills that will make them very competitive and attractive to many employers; and

(2) greatly exemplifies and strengthens the high nobility of purpose that is the founding grace of this great Nation” (Congress.gov, 2017)

            Through this bill, job-training and apprenticeships would be provided. African-American men would be covered under this law, if passed. The short-term goals seem to be to give more men of color employment opportunities and the long-term goals is to rebuild infrastructures while continuing to keep men of color employed.

            The funding for this policy should not have to come from any outside government sources. The contractors and employers will provide the funds for the participants. The Secretary of Labor will oversee the policy to make sure it is being implemented. The effectiveness of the policy will be measured by tracking the increase of the number of men of color who gain employment and the progress of the rebuilding of infrastructures. The sunset of this policy was not clear.

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            The knowledge base or scientific grounding on which the policy rests is the fact that people of color, men in particular, have not been able to attain any type of wealth due to discriminatory practices. There is historical evidence that people of color have been marginalized in every aspect of the word since they arrived to America during slavery days.

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**The policy analysis**

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            The goals for this policy is to make room for men of color to gain employment which is legal, just and democratic. The goal also contributes to greater social equality because it would lessen the wage gap and strengthen the economic well-being of people of color. If passed, this policy would, “require the Department of Labor to request labor unions, general contractors, and businesses that will rebuild infrastructure, transportation systems, technology and computer networks, and energy distribution systems to actively recruit, hire, and provide on-the-job training to African American men ages 18 to 39 through existing jobs, apprenticeships, and "earn while you learn" programs” (LegiNation, 2017). This would give the opportunity for a better quality of life for the targeted population and overall society.

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            The goals of this policy are consistent with the values for social work and the mission of social work. According to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) (1996, revised in 2017), “The mission of the social work profession is rooted in a set of core values. These core values, embraced by social workers throughout the profession's history, are the foundation of social work's unique purpose and perspective:

♣         service

♣         social justice

♣         dignity and worth of the person

♣         importance of human relationships

♣         integrity

♣         competence. (NASW, 1996, revised in 2017)

This policy covers all values with the emphasis on social justice and dignity and worth of a person.

            There was no hidden ideology in this policy. The targeted population, men of color, are viewed as having been treated unjustly when attempting to gain employment. The idea and focus of this policy is clear. The social vision of this policy is to right the wrongs that slavery initiated in the 19th century and still perpetuate today, in the 21st century.

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            The status quo is being interrupted by challenging those with power and privilege to use their strengths to help build up the African American male which would in turn, build his community. This is not a radicle departure but, the beginning of the voyage. The major beneficiaries of this policy are men of color and in the best interest of people of color in general. If implemented, real social change could happen and have long term effects for people of color. These affects may not move the man of color to equal status of his social counter-parts but, the policy would make a significant difference in the African American community.

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**Political Feasibility**

The 15 sponsors for this policy are all democrat:

David Scott (D)\*, Alma Adams (D), Lacy Clay (D), Emanuel Cleaver II (D), Kevin Cramer (R), Dwight Evans (D), Marcia Fudge (D), Al Green (D), Al Lawson Jr. (D), Mia Love (R), Donald Norcross (D), Stacey Plaskett (D), Bobby Rush (D), Tim Ryan (D), Mark Takano (D) (LegiNation, 2017). This could imply that opposition may come primarily from the Republican Party.

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            In researching the public reaction for this policy, there is not any to be found and the bill has been stagnant since it was introduced. If people were paying attention to this policy, if would incite two different responses. Employers may feel pressure to hire men of color and may think the government is trying to control them. Men of color may feel like they have a chance to gain livable wages but it is a forced change. Neither feeling is comfortable. This policy does not address a major political issue, it is a societal issue and no fundamental values are threatened.

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            The political and social climate for people of color is unsettling. According to findings reported in an article written about racial and ethnic politics, “Recent evidence confirms affluent African Americans’ greater mistrust of white society. More college-educated blacks than black high school dropouts believe that it is true or might be true that “the government deliberately investigates black elected officials in order to discredit them,” that “the government deliberately makes sure that drugs are easily available in poor black neighborhoods in order to harm black people,” and that “the virus which causes AIDS was deliberately created in a laboratory in order to infect black people.” In a 1995 Washington Post survey, when asked whether “discrimination is the major reason for the economic and social ills blacks face,” 84 percent of middle-class blacks, as against 66 percent of working-class and poor blacks, agreed” (Hochschild, 2016)

With perceptions, such as these, it is going to take more than a policy to change this view; it will take direct and swift action.

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            This policy could go in two different directions. One, the public could embrace it as an opportunity to balance the economy while rebuilding infrastructures. One the other hand, it could be seen as another form of slavery. The way this policy is written could give the impression that men of color are yet again being used for their strength and to help America thrive. The policy specially says the policies purpose is, “To rebuild the Nation’s crumbling infrastructure, transportation systems, technology and computer networks, and energy distribution systems” (Congress.gov, 2017). This sounds like plantation jargon.

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            The social welfare agencies, institutions and organization that are being targeted for support are, “the African American community, churches, the National Urban League, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 100 Black Men of America, high school and college job placement offices, and media outlets” (LegiNation, 2017). It will depend on how these entities view this policy that will determine their acceptance of it. The strength of these groups is their unity when they decide they will support a cause. These are groups that can either work strongly for or against a system.

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            The major federal, state, or local agencies affected by this policy are “labor unions, general contractors, and businesses” such as, “International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada, the International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers Union, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, the National Electrical Contractors Association, the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART), the Laborers’ International Union of North America (LIUNA), the International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE), and the United Steelworkers (USW). Such coordination shall also be done in conjunction with the National Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee” (Congress.gov, 2017) They are affected because they are the one who would be providing the jobs.

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**Economic Feasibility**

This policy does not require funding, it requires employers to open their doors to men of color.

**Administrative Feasibility**

            If this policy is implemented, it could accomplish its goal of providing paid job-training for men of color and it would be beneficial for all parties involved. The potential side effects are the pressure felt by the job providers and the job seekers, both may feel like they are under pressure. There are no perceived ramifications for the nontargeted sector other again, pressure to hire people of color even though it may not be mandatory under this policy.

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            If this policy is established correctly, it should generate more revenue that is must pay out; scarcity of resources should not be a factor. This policy may provide better economic results for men of color and this policy, although frail in some areas, would be better than no policy at all. The current Affirmative Action policy could be amended—again—in lieu of creating this new policy.

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**Recommendations /Advocacy**

            At first glance, this policy appeared to be a step in the right direction and both workable and desirable. After looking deeper into the policy, it is still workable but not as desirable due to its slave labor-like undertones. Ethically, no changes could be made to this policy other than the wording that would take away the purpose of the policy, it is still to help America build of the backs of men of color.

            The policy does represent a wise use of resources but again, men or color are the primary resources and the job-training/apprenticeships and like the dangling carrot. Rather than implement this policy, perhaps more effort could be placed on current policy that combats discriminatory hiring practices and people of power/privilege should be held more accountable. The manpower needed to carry out this policy could be used to strengthen existing policies.

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