

POLICY POSITION



Driver Shortage and Workforce Development

NWRA POSITION

NWRA backs increasing federal support for job training programs at the state and local levels as well as for veterans to address the hiring challenges facing the waste and recycling industry due to shortages of commercial vehicle drivers, mechanics, and welders.

BACKGROUND

The waste and recycling industry has experienced a growing labor shortage over the past several years, particularly when it comes to hiring individuals with a Commercial Driver's License (CDL). The private sector waste and recycling industry has a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) fleet of more than 100,000 waste, recycling, and compost collection trucks and an even greater number of CDL drivers.

Driving for the industry offers numerous advantages such as rising wages, a five-day work week, set daily work schedules, and being able to return home at the end of each day's shift unlike long-haul drivers. Despite all this, our industry's companies are increasingly struggling to find enough CDL drivers.

By 2026, the solid waste collection industry will have 14,200 new jobs for collection drivers and riders; 1,900 new jobs for diesel service technicians and mechanics; and 300 new jobs for welders, cutters, solderers, and brazers. A tightening labor market with more job openings than potential qualified employees will only exacerbate the situation as demand for these positions grows.

Passage of the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (H.R. 2353) reauthorizing the Perkins Act and the Professional Pell Education Learning (PROPEL) Act (H.R. 3831), allowing Pell Grants to be used at trade and vocational schools, will help address this pressing problem by increasing the pool of individuals possessing the right skill sets.

Perkins Act reauthorization is intended to modernize the law by aligning career and technical education programs to meet the needs of the regional, state, and local labor markets; supporting greater collaboration between schools and employers; increasing student participation in work-based learning opportunities; and promoting the use of recognized industry and other postsecondary credentials.

The PROPEL Act would increase the flexibility of Pell Grants by authorizing nontraditional schools that are approved for GI benefits to be Pell Grant eligible. By

expanding the educational options available to students, the workforce shortage in areas where skills are in demand can be met.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) is implementing provisions of the FAST Act to assist in the transition of military veterans into careers as CMV drivers. These include a rule extending the time for military personnel to apply for a skills test waiver, permitting active duty military personnel to apply and be tested for their commercial learner's permits and CDL in the state where they are stationed, and allowing veteran operators to obtain their Department of Transportation medical certification exams from their Department of Veterans Affairs physician. The CMV Operator Safety Training grant program will provide grant funds to commercial driver training schools that train veterans to transition into civilian motor carrier careers.

TALKING POINTS

- NWRA thanks Congress for passage of the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act reauthorizing and modernizing the Carl D. Perkins Act and urges the President to sign the legislation into law.
- NWRA supports passage of the PROPEL Act to increase flexibility of Pell Grants so they can be used to prepare individuals for in demand jobs and close the skills gap.
- NWRA embraces FMCSA's efforts to assist in the transition of military veterans into careers as CMV drivers.