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(Original Signature of Member)

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To establish a grant program in the Department of Labor to assist unemployed and under-employed workers to document the American experience.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. LIEU introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee
on _____

A BILL

To establish a grant program in the Department of Labor
to assist unemployed and under-employed workers to document the American experience.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “21st Century Federal
5 Writers’ Project Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) In 1935, during the Great Depression,
2 President Franklin Delano Roosevelt established
3 The Federal Writers' Project of the New Deal Era.
4 This program was organized to employ writers, edi-
5 tors, historians, researchers, journalists, librarians,
6 broadcasters, photographers, and others to document
7 American society.

8 (2) The Federal Writers Project employed up to
9 10,000 people between its founding in 1935 during
10 the Great Depression and the publication of its first
11 guides in 1943.

12 (3) The original Federal Writers' Project had
13 many successes, such as—

14 (A) the American Guide Series, which cov-
15 ered 48 States, 40 cities, 18 regions and terri-
16 tories, and countless counties, with John
17 Steinbeck calling the Series, “the most com-
18 prehensive account of the United States ever
19 got together, and nothing since has even ap-
20 proached it. It was compiled during the depres-
21 sion by the best writers in America”;

22 (B) creating opportunities for writers who
23 went on to become some of the United States
24 greatest authors, including Ralph Ellison, Rich-

1 ard Wright, Saul Bellow, and Zora Neale
2 Hurston;

3 (C) developing the Slave Narrative Project,
4 the largest project to document the experience
5 of formerly enslaved people, as part of the oral
6 history and photography project telling the
7 story of 10,000 people of the United States;
8 and

9 (D) creating over 1,000 books and pam-
10 phlets covering local and regional histories, folk-
11 lore collections, humor, ethnic studies, and na-
12 ture studies.

13 (4) Between late 2019 and May 2022, more
14 than 360 newspapers closed and the country is on
15 track to lose more than one-third of its total news-
16 papers by 2025.

17 (5) Around 7 percent of America's counties are
18 without a local news outlet.

19 (6) The original Federal Writers' Project pro-
20 vided the opportunity to observe and document the
21 Great Depression as part of a larger portrait of
22 American society. The 21st Century Federal Writ-
23 ers' Project will serve to update this portrait of
24 American society in the 21st Century.

1 **SEC. 3. DOL GRANT PROGRAM.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the
3 date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Labor,
4 working through the Employment and Training Adminis-
5 tration, shall establish a grant program to provide eligible
6 entities described in subsection (d) with funds to assist
7 individuals who are unemployed or underemployed in
8 order to document in writing and images the current state
9 of the American experience.

10 (b) INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP.—

11 (1) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established an
12 interagency working group for the purpose of devel-
13 oping the program’s guidelines.

14 (2) MEMBERS.—The interagency working group
15 shall be composed of the following members:

16 (A) The Secretary.

17 (B) The Chair of the National Endowment
18 for the Humanities.

19 (C) The Librarian of Congress.

20 (D) Experts in the field of journalism.

21 (E) Any other experts the Secretary deter-
22 mines to be appropriate.

23 (3) REPORTS.—The working group shall issue a
24 report on the composition of the working group and
25 how the program will be structured, how grant re-

1 cipients are determined, and another report fol-
2 lowing disbursement on efficacy and lessons learned.

3 (4) TERMINATION.—The working group shall
4 terminate not later than 180 days after the date on
5 which the final grant under this program is dis-
6 bursed.

7 (c) GRANT FEATURES.—In administering the grant
8 program under subsection (a), the Secretary shall deter-
9 mine—

10 (1) the parameters of the grant program; and

11 (2) the amount and duration of grant awards
12 under the program, except that in no case may an
13 individual grant awarded under the program for a
14 fiscal year exceed an amount equal to 7.5 percent of
15 the amounts appropriated under subsection (j) for
16 such fiscal year.

17 (d) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—To be eligible to receive a
18 grant under this section, an entity shall submit an applica-
19 tion to the Secretary of Labor at such time and in such
20 manner as the Secretary may require and be—

21 (1) a nonprofit organization that has experience
22 in writing, researching, collecting, curating, or dis-
23 seminating educational information;

24 (2) a newsroom, which may be a nonprofit or
25 for-profit entity;

1 (3) a public or nonprofit library; or

2 (4) a communications labor organization or
3 guild.

4 (e) PREFERENCE FOR CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS.—In
5 selecting individuals to receive funds, a grant recipient
6 shall give preference to individuals who have experience
7 or education in an occupation described in the Standard
8 Occupational Classification for categories 25–000 and 27–
9 000.

10 (f) GEOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY.—In selecting the recipi-
11 ents for a grant under this section, the Secretary of Labor
12 shall, to the extent practicable, ensure equitable geo-
13 graphic distribution, including urban and rural areas and
14 Tribal lands.

15 (g) REPOSITORY.—

16 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Labor shall
17 establish a repository of works developed through
18 the grant program, in which grant recipients submit
19 completed works from subgrant recipients, give cred-
20 it to each writer or artist of the completed work, and
21 make such works available to the public.

22 (2) TIMING.—Not later than 90 days after re-
23 ceipt of a completed work under paragraph (1), the
24 Secretary of Labor shall forward such work to the

1 Librarian of Congress to archive such material in
2 accordance with subsection (g).

3 (h) ARCHIVE.—The Librarian of Congress shall es-
4 tablish an archive program in the American Folklife Cen-
5 ter at the Library of Congress to collect the written and
6 visual works collected by the Secretary under subsection
7 (f) and make such works publicly available in a digital and
8 print format, which format includes giving credit to each
9 work's writer or artist.

10 (i) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—

11 (1) GRANT RECIPIENT REPORTING.—The Sec-
12 retary of Labor shall develop reporting guidelines for
13 grant recipients under this section to include, at a
14 minimum, information regarding—

15 (A) the amount of funds received by each
16 grant recipient, the amount provided to
17 subgrant recipients, and the number of projects
18 completed;

19 (B) the race, ethnicity, age, location in
20 terms of urban or rural, and regional diversity
21 of subgrant recipients;

22 (C) the number of requests made to review
23 the completed projects or works distributed
24 (when available); and

1 (D) such other data as the Secretary con-
2 siders important.

3 (2) REPORTING TO CONGRESS.—Not less than
4 once each year while the program under this section
5 is in operation, the Secretary of Labor shall submit
6 a report summarizing the data collected under para-
7 graph (1) to the Committees on Appropriations and
8 Education and Labor of the House of Representa-
9 tives and the Committees on Appropriations and
10 Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Sen-
11 ate.

12 (j) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—

13 (1) SECRETARY.—The Secretary of Labor may
14 reserve 5 percent of the funds made available to
15 carry out the program under this section for admin-
16 istrative costs.

17 (2) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—An eligible entity
18 that receives a grant under this section for a fiscal
19 year may reserve not more than 10 percent of funds
20 received for such year to administer its program
21 under the grant.

22 (k) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
23 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
24 \$60,000,000 for fiscal year 2024.