



## Congress Must Invest in Skilled American Labor: Pass the Jumpstart Savings Act

*Opinion article by West Virginia State Treasurer Larry Pack*



President Donald Trump and Vice President J.D. Vance understand that domestic manufacturing is crucial to the national security of our country. For decades, we put the lust for cheap consumer goods over supporting America-based businesses and jobs. This has decimated communities across our great country all the while increasing our reliance on foreign nations. To combat ill-sighted policies that sent thousands of jobs overseas to countries such as China, President Trump's administration has focused on rebalancing trade agreements that encourage U.S. economic development. The goal is simple; we must rebuild U.S. Manufacturing from the ground up.

If President Trump is successful, the next concern we will face is we need more Americans seeking out "blue-collar" careers. Latest reports indicate that the United States needs roughly 3.8 million more workers to fill the rising need for industrial occupations. That means for every one college graduate, we need one person choosing to become a plumber, electrician, welder or any numerous other skilled labor career paths.

To incentivize these hard-working Americans, President Trump and his team championed legislation to eliminate the federal income tax on tips and overtime, ushering in a tax break for working-class people. The President understands that we need to not punish those who are the backbone of American industrial power. Now Congressman Riley Moore wants to take it a step further by adding a new tool for these citizens through the Jumpstart Savings Act.

The Jumpstart Savings Act will help Americans save tax-free for careers in the trades, skilled labor, and apprenticeship-based professions while strengthening the nation's workforce as the United States rebuilds its manufacturing and industrial base. The legislation establishes tax-advantaged savings accounts modeled after 529 college savings plans. These accounts allow individuals and families to save for apprenticeship programs, trade certifications, tools, equipment, and small business startup costs associated with skilled professions.

Congressman Riley Moore created the West Virginia Jumpstart Savings Program when he was our state Treasurer. This program was the first state-level tax-advantaged savings program designed to help residents save for tools, equipment, certifications, licensure, apprenticeship expenses, and business startup costs related to skilled trades and technical occupations in the country.

We have improved upon his brainchild by transitioning the Jumpstart Savings Program from a basic savings account to a state tax-advantaged investment account through the West Virginia Money Market Pool. We also authorized the use of a pre-paid debit card that participants can load with Jumpstart Savings account funds to pay for qualified expenses and the allowance of family, friends, and employers to make contributions to an individual's Jumpstart Savings account by using PayPal/Venmo. What is missing is a matching federal tax benefit to take this program to the next level. Exactly what Congressman Moore's federal Jumpstart Savings Act will do if enacted by Congress.

Everyone has their own path in life; and while some will choose to go to a four-year college, 75-percent of West Virginians enter the workforce through a different path. They attend a two-year community college program, a career technical education, or apprenticeship program to learn new skills. We need to protect our well-paying blue-collar jobs and empower the talented individuals who use their skills to support their communities – and most importantly, their families. Factories don't build themselves. It's going to take skilled Americans working with their hands to renew our nation's greatness.

We urge Congress to seriously consider adopting Congressman Moore's Jumpstart Savings Act. For Americans to remain a world power and continue to be the leader of the industrial world, we must invest in hard-working, blue-collar American workers. Legislation like the Jumpstart Saving Act breaks down barriers to opportunities and focuses on providing resources to skilled laborers we desperately need. President Trump is hyper focused on ushering a new age of American industrial manpower. We need to build a workforce to make sure we can grasp that opportunity.

## 2026 ProStart Hospitality Cup



Carver Career and Technical Education culinary team students attend the 2026 ProStart Hospitality Cup at the Embassy Suites in Charleston, W.Va. Pictured left to right: Thomas Grant-Coach, Will Ellis, Amazing Tognoli, Emma Craven, Kierstin Wells, Aiden Walton, and Lola Zamora.

Budding culinary students from across West Virginia showed off their skills at the 2026 ProStart Hospitality Cup this month. During the first week of March, more than 60 students from 11 West Virginia schools gathered at the Embassy Suites in Charleston for the culinary competition hosted by the National Restaurant Association Education Foundation's ProStart program.

The competition highlighted each team's creative abilities through the preparation of a three-course meal in 60 minutes. Students were only allowed to use two butane burners and did not have access to running water or electricity. Professional chefs judged on taste, skills, teamwork, safety and sanitation.

"All team members have strengths and weaknesses," said Carver Career and Technical Education student Emma Craven. "Some members of the team are good with pressure, and some are not. Our relationships with each other helped us quickly think of solutions to problems."

Additionally, management teams demonstrated their knowledge of the restaurant and food service industry by developing a new restaurant concept and business plan. The teams submitted a written proposal and presented to a panel of judges.

Industry mentors, including long-time supporters Mandy Gum and Tom Grant, praised the students' growth, confidence, and ability to work as a cohesive team, noting that the competition mirrors real-world expectations in the hospitality industry.

Students expressed pride in their creative designs, strong communication, and ability to manage pressure, with several planning to pursue advanced culinary education, including aspirations to attend the Culinary Institute of America.

#### **Culinary Competition Winners**

- 1st Place: Monongalia Technical Education Center
- 2nd Place: Marion County Technical Center
- 3rd Place: Jefferson High School

#### **Management Competition Winners**

- 1st Place: Monongalia Technical Education Center
- 2nd Place: Marion County Technical Center
- 3rd Place: Carver Career Center

The first-place team winners in both the Culinary and Management competitions will advance to the National ProStart Invitational to be held April 24-26 in Baltimore, Maryland.

## **Jumpstart Savings for Culinary and Hospitality Management**

A representative from the Jumpstart Savings Program was on hand to meet with culinary and hospitality management students during this year's ProStart competition to explain how Jumpstart Savings can help students save for their career goals. The culinary arts often require specialized equipment and business supplies. The Jumpstart Savings Program is a state tax-advantaged investment account that provides culinary artisans in West Virginia a resource to save for the tools, equipment, and other costs required to launch and sustain a business.

Click on the link to learn more about how the Jumpstart Savings can help.

[\*\*Learn More\*\*](#)

## **Upcoming Events**

- 3/20 - Veterans Resource Event (Parkersburg)
- 3/25-3/26 - West Virginia Construction and Design Expo (Charleston)
- 4/8 - WV Society of CPAs Lunch and Learn (Online)
- 4/8 - Eastern's Spring 2026 College Fair (Moorefield)
- 4/28 - Bridging Innovation Week 2026 (Morgantown)
- 4/29 - WV Gear Up (Charleston)
- 5/4-5/5 - Prepped and Polished at the AJC (Charleston)

**Does your organization or group need more information about the Jumpstart Savings Program?**

Staff members are available for events, speaking engagements and conferences. If you or your organization would like to schedule an in-person or webinar speaker please email [wvjumpstart@wvsto.gov](mailto:wvjumpstart@wvsto.gov) or call 304-340-5055.



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