

ARKANSAS

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

ISSUE NO 2 | FEBRUARY 2023



As we come to the end of black history month, we as a Board want to ensure that we support the African American communities across our state. WIOA is **designed to strengthen and improve our nation's public workforce system** and help get Americans, including youth and those with significant barriers to employment, into high-quality jobs and careers and help employers hire and retain skilled workers.

Title I of the legislation is based on the following elements:

- Training and employment programs must be designed and managed at the local level where the needs of businesses and individuals are best understood.
- Customers must be able to conveniently access the employment, education, training, and information services they need at a single location in their neighborhoods.
- Customers should have choices in deciding the training program that best fits their needs and the organizations that will provide that service. They should have control over their own career development.
- Businesses will provide information, leadership, and play an active role in ensuring that the system prepares people for current and future jobs.

Board Chairman
Tom Anderson



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AWDB Social Media Links

Facebook— 71 followers
www.facebook.com/AWDBBoard

Twitter— 179 followers
[@AWDBBoard](https://twitter.com/AWDBBoard)



EMPLOYEE

Spotlight

Have you ever met someone and thought, “That is one of the nicest people I have met in a long time”?

Eddie L. Thomas serves as Assistant Director for the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS). In this role, he oversees the Office of Employment Assistance which administers federally funded employment and training programs including Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Wagner-Peyser/Employment Services, Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG), Foreign Labor Certification, National Career Readiness Certificate, Discretionary Grants, National Dislocated Worker and Disaster Grants, and provides staff support to the Arkansas Workforce Development Board.

His career spans over 20 years of professional and community service in education, workforce development and economic development. Eddie obtained a Bachelor’s Degree in Organizational Management, a Master of Arts in Teaching from the University of Central Arkansas, and a Master’s in Public Administration from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Thomas is a Delta Regional Authority, Delta Leadership Institute Executive Academy graduate. In 2019, Thomas was featured as one of Arkansas Business Journal’s Top 40 Under 40 Business and Community Leaders. That same year, he completed the Mid-South Economic Development Course in association with the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce.

During his tenure with ADWS, Mr. Thomas earned an executive education leadership certificate from Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government. He was recently appointed to the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA)- Workforce IT Support Center Steering Committee; appointed to the Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund Board of Directors; and elected to serve on the Executive Committee of the National Governors Association (NGA)- National Association of State Liaisons for Workforce Development Partnerships.

Eddie has served in various civic organizations including past Polemarch for Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Incorporated, past President for the Lions Club, Board of Trustee member of the Southeast Arkansas College (SEARK), ACT Work Ready Communities- National Council member, various advisory boards, committees and task forces. He received the Thomas C. Brunson Humanitarian Award as well as the Dr. Martin Luther King Citizen of the Year honor in his hometown of Warren, and currently resides in Little Rock, Arkansas.



Eddie L. Thomas

State Workforce Board Functions

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board shall assist the Governor in:

The plan is to break down each role so we will start at the top of the legislation. In this language, “assist” means that the AWDB should be advocating and promoting the Governor’s vision by encouraging the State and Local WIOA program partners to support the Administration’s initiatives. Right now we know that Governor Sanders has two major initiatives:

- 1) Education— One of Governor Sanders’ first big pieces of legislation is Arkansas LEARNS (Senate Bill 294). See page 4 for an overview of the bill process and how to track their movements through the process.
- 2) Workforce— This initiative began during her campaign and finalized as an Executive Order (EO) on February 9, 2023, when she took office. All of the governor’s EOs can be found on her official [website](#). This EO created a Chief Workforce Officer (CWO) position under the Governor’s Office. The CWO is tasked with coordinating, managing, and directing the Governor’s workforce development policies and career education strategy for the State of Arkansas. This position will also be the Chairman of the following Cabinet:

Mike Rogers



Governor’s Chief Workforce Officer

- The Secretary of the Department of Commerce, or his designee;
- The Secretary of the Department of Corrections, or his designee;
- The Secretary of the Department of Education, or his designee;
- The Secretary of the Department of Human Services, or her designee;
- The Secretary of the Department of Labor and Licensing, or his designee; and
- The Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, or his designee.

Many Opportunities Are Ahead of Us

	Dec 2022	Nov 2022	Dec 2021	Chg From Nov 2022	Chg From Dec 2021
Civilian Labor Force	1,352,115	1,351,852	1,330,743	263	21,372
Employment	1,303,039	1,302,443	1,287,166	596	15,873
Unemployment	49,076	49,409	43,577	-333	5,499
Unemployment Rate	3.6%	3.7%	3.3%	-0.1%	0.3%
Labor Participation Rate	56.5%	56.6%	56.2%	-0.1%	0.3%
U.S. Unemployment Rate	3.5%	3.6%	3.9%	-0.1%	-0.4%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey. More information about the data is available at <https://www.bls.gov/cps/definitions.htm>

December’s Labor Participation Rate of 56.5% shows that we have every opportunity to help individuals reenter the workforce. Raising the LPR by 0.5% would take roughly 12,000 people coming back to the workforce. Raising it by 1% would take roughly 24,000 people coming back to the workforce.

2023 Session Navigation



Arkansas State Legislature

94th General Assembly - Regular Session, 2023

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Search for Acts (Example: 1)

The Board staff has had several questions about filed bills during a Session. Here are some of those questions

- 1) Who is the lead sponsor?
- 2) Who are the co-sponsors?
- 3) Where can I find the bill or an Act? You can either click on the PDF below or search for the bill in the box above on the General Assembly's website.
- 4) How can I find out where the bill is in the process? At the bottom of the page, you will see Bill Status History. This is where you can follow it through the process.
- 5) Where do I find all of this information? www.arkleg.ar.us

SB294 - TO CREATE THE LEARNS ACT; TO AMEND VARIOUS PROVISIONS OF THE ARKANSAS CODE AS THEY RELATE TO EARLY CHILDHOOD THROUGH GRADE TWELVE (12) EDUCATION IN THE STATE OF ARKANSAS; TO DECLARE AN EMERGENCY; AND TO DECLARE AN EMERGENCY.

Bill Number:	 SB294
Status:	House -- RECEIVED FROM THE SENATE
Originating Chamber:	Senate
Lead Sponsor:	B. Davis
Other Primary Sponsor:	Brooks
CoSponsors:	M. Shepherd , McCollum , B. McKenzie , Pilkington , S. Meeks , Wardlaw , Eubanks , Cozart , Womack , C. Fite , Lundstrum , Bentley , Gonzales , Beck , K. Brown , Richmond , Fortner , Cavanaugh , Maddox , Barker , Rye , Hollowell , Watson , Lynch , Wing , Crawford , L. Johnson , C. Cooper , Breaux , Evans , McGrew , Ray , Beaty Jr. , McClure , Milligan , Haak , John Carr , Underwood , Furman , G. Hodges , J. Moore , Achor , Burkes , Hawk , McAlindon , M. Brown , Rose , Puryear , Gramlich , Painter , Duffield , Unger , R. Scott Richardson , Andrews , Hester , Irvin , J. Dismang , J. English , G. Stubblefield , Flippo , B. Johnson , D. Wallace , Hill , M. Johnson , K. Hammer , D. Sullivan , Gilmore , M. McKee , C. Penzo , J. Boyd , J. Petty , J. Bryant , Crowell , Stone , Dees , J. Payton , J. Dotson , A. Clark
Introduction Date:	2/20/2023 4:55:10 PM

Upcoming Events

Date	Meeting	
2/23/2023	Senate Calendar	

Bill Status History

Chamber	Date	Action	Vote
House	2/23/2023 2:21:46 PM	RECEIVED FROM THE SENATE	
Senate	2/23/2023 1:50:55 PM	Ordered immediately transmitted to the House.	
Senate	2/23/2023 1:50:48 PM	EMERGENCY CLAUSE ADOPTED	
Senate	2/23/2023 1:50:42 PM	Read the third time and passed.	Senate Votes
Senate	2/22/2023 5:13:29 PM	Returned by the Committee, with the recommendation that it Do Pass	
Senate	2/20/2023 5:00:53 PM	Read first time, rules suspended, read second time, referred to EDUCATION COMMITTEE - SENATE	
Senate	2/20/2023 4:55:23 PM	Filed	