

The International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers Special Report

Election Year (2008) National Survey on American Voters' Attitudes Toward Guaranteeing Two Years of Tuition-Free Post- Secondary Vocational or Technical Education or Training to Every Qualified American

Key Findings

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Preconceptions of the American Public

Part A:

How Americans See the Relationship of Education to Jobs Today

What Americans Believe Now

Table 1

There Is Widespread Agreement – Right Now – in the Importance of Increasing Post-High School Vocational Training – So America Can Compete More Effectively In the World Economy.

Q. 3 How important do you think each of the following matters are – very important; somewhat important; or not at all important at all...first...

	<u>Very Important</u>	<u>Somewhat Important</u>	<u>Not at all Important</u>	<u>TOTAL: Important</u>
...increasing the level of training and skills development in America so America can compete more effectively in the world economy.....	68	29	2	97%
...assuring access for all Americans to affordable health care	80	15	3	95%
...keeping mortgage interest rates down	64	29	7	93%
...increasing the minimum wage	51	33	13	84%

What Americans Believe Now

Table 2

A Skill Shortage: Yes or No?

Americans Say “Yes”

Q.8 From what you understand, is America facing a skills shortage today in skilled blue-collar professions, like electricians, machinists and the like -- or is there an oversupply of persons in these skilled blue-collar professions?

There <u>is</u> a skills shortage in blue-collar professions.....	54%
There is an oversupply of persons with these skilled blue-collar professions.....	14%
Not sure.....	32%

What Americans Believe Now

Table 3

Nearly 60% of New Jobs in America in the Next Decade Will Be for Those Persons with Vocational, Technical or Apprenticeship Training.

About 45% of Americans Realize That.

Q.6 From what you've heard, do you think more jobs in the next ten years that will be created in America will be primarily for 1) those with a four-year college education, or 2) for those with a high-school level of education and some skills or education training beyond high school, but less than a full four-year college education?

1) For those with a four-year college education.....	29%
2) For those with a high-school level of education with some skills or education training beyond high school, but less than a full four year college education	45%
Not sure.....	26%

What Americans Believe Now

Table 4

Slightly More Than Half of Americans Would Still Press Younger Americans to Go to College – Even If They Might Prefer to Do Something Else.

Q. 7f *Let me read you some statements about work training and education, and for each one, could you tell me whether you agree a lot; agree a little; disagree a little; or disagree a lot with that statement...first...*

Even if you are a skilled craftsman, the real money and long-term economic security these days is with college-educated persons and professional and white-collar jobs –and so I would still strongly press young people, including any in my immediate family, to aim for a four-year college – even if they might prefer doing something else.

Agree a lot	27%	\	<u>56% “Agree”</u>
Agree a little	29%	/	
Disagree a little.....	20%	\	39% “Disagree”
Disagree a lot.....	19%	/	
Not sure	4%		

What Americans Believe Now

Table 5

At the Same Time, Americans Overwhelmingly Believe High Schools in America Should Present More Alternatives to High School Students Than Just Going to College

Q. 7b Let me read you some statements about work training and education, and for each one, could you tell me whether you agree a lot; agree a little; disagree a little; or disagree a lot with that statement...first...

There should be more alternatives presented to high school students than just straight academic studies and going to college. Many students have different interests or different strengths...and would benefit greatly from a more diverse curriculum of vocational and skills programs.

Agree a lot	66%	\	<u>96% “Agree”</u>
Agree a little	30%	/	
Disagree a little.....	2%	\	4% “Disagree”
Disagree a lot.....	2%	/	
Not sure	1%		

What Americans Believe Now

Table 6

Also, Americans Widely Sense That Young Americans Are Not Adequately Informed About Vocational, Technical or Apprenticeship Opportunities

Q. 7c Let me read you some statements about work training and education, and for each one, could you tell me whether you agree a lot; agree a little; disagree a little; or disagree a lot with that statement...first...

One of the problems with many school systems is that so much attention is devoted to college bound programs that they don't adequately inform high school students about the other career opportunities available to young people through apprenticeship programs and various other vocational programs.

Agree a lot	49%	\	<u>82% "Agree"</u>
Agree a little	33%	/	
Disagree a little.....	8%	\	12% "Disagree"
Disagree a lot.....	4%	/	
Not sure	5%		

Part B

How Well Are American High School Students Informed About Post- Secondary Vocational Training and Apprenticeships?

Table 7

American High School Students Get Much Less Information About Post-Secondary Vocational Training and Apprenticeships Than About College – Even Though That’s Where More Jobs Are Created

<u>Amount of Information Provided By High School About:</u>	<u>A Lot</u>	<u>A Fair Amount</u>	<u>Not Much</u>
College	33%	41%	25%
Post-High School Vocational Education	14	29	53
Apprenticeships in High-Skill Occupations.....	8	22	63
Non-College, Hi-Tech Institutes	8	28	55

Table 8

By a Wide Margin, Most Americans Feel They Were Not Adequately Informed in High School About All the Possibilities in Vocational Training, Hi-tech Institutes, and Serious Apprenticeship Programs Leading to High Skill/High Pay Trades and Crafts -- After High School

Q. A28 Looking back at what they presented to you in high school, do you feel you were adequately informed about all the possibilities in vocational training, hi-tech institutes, and serious apprenticeship programs leading to high skill/high pay trades and crafts -- after high school?

Yes.....	35%
No.....	57%
Not sure	9%

Table 9

Almost 40 percent of Americans say They Would Have Looked More Carefully at Non-College Post-Secondary Vocational Options Had They Been Better Informed About Them

Q. A29 Suppose you found out in high school that highly-skilled trades and occupations, such as electricians, machinists, sheet metal workers, often make over \$80-90,000 per year in total compensation when you include health care overage, paid vacations, pensions and so on... Would that have encouraged you to look more carefully at training opportunities in those fields, or would knowing that not have made much of a difference to you?

Yes, would have looked more carefully 40%

No, would not have made much difference..... 49%

Not sure..... 11%

Part C

Americans' Response to Arguments Supporting Two Years of Guaranteed Post-High School Tuition-Free for Every Qualified American

Table 10

Test Argument One:

Q. M1 Each decade, over 30 million American children enter high school, but only 6 million ever receive a college degree – that’s only one in five. That means that for many young people, the real alternative is a minimum wage job with little future...That's wrong. There should be a good, well-paying option for the 24 million kids who don’t go to college...and they exist in the form of vocational and technical schools, apprenticeship programs, community college and high tech institutes...and they should receive adequate government support.

Agree a lot	54%	\	<u>90% “Agree”</u>
Agree a little	36%	/	
Disagree a little.....	5%	\	8% “Disagree”
Disagree a lot.....	3%	/	
Not sure	3%		

Table 11

Test Argument Two:

Q. M2 Most public investment in education is concentrated on colleges and universities, and while those are certainly important, since five out of six young people will not go to a four-year college, it is vitally important that the government dramatically increase its level of support of vocational and technical training apprenticeship programs, community college programs and high tech alternatives...so non-four year college kids and others don't get left out in the cold and doomed to minimum wage jobs with little future.

Agree a lot	52%	\	<u>86% "Agree"</u>
Agree a little	34%	/	
Disagree a little.....	7%	\	12% "Disagree"
Disagree a lot.....	5%	/	
Not sure	3%		

Table 12

Test Argument Three:

Q. M3 The U.S. Labor Department has reported that the U.S. will face a skilled-worker shortage of eight million high-skill, technical workers by 2010, and so just for maintaining our competitive position in the world -- to say nothing of our national security needs -- the country must immediately invest more in vocational and technical training to fill these high-skilled jobs.

Agree a lot	56%	\	<u>86% “Agree”</u>
Agree a little	30%	/	
Disagree a little.....	9%	\	10% “Disagree”
Disagree a lot.....	1%	/	
Not sure	4%		

Table 13

Test Argument Four:

Q. M4 Most Americans don't realize that some vocational and training programs require years of study and training...and that's why they result in such responsible and high-paid jobs and careers. For example, the apprenticeship program at Harley-Davidson run jointly by the company and the Machinists Union involves about 10,000 total hours of training, both on the job and in the classroom. Most Americans just don't know that.

Agree a lot	44%	\	<u>90% "Agree"</u>
Agree a little	46%	/	
Disagree a little.....	5%	\	6% "Disagree"
Disagree a lot.....	1%	/	
Not sure	5%		

Table 14

Test Argument Five:

Q. M5 Besides maintaining our competitive position in the world, America's vital national security needs require highly-trained, high skilled workers. For example, to assemble a sophisticated aircraft like the F-22 or other advanced U.S. military aircraft, it takes more than good design; it requires a large number of highly skilled and well-trained workers.

Agree a lot	64%	\	<u>93% "Agree"</u>
Agree a little	29%	/	
Disagree a little.....	4%	\	5% "Disagree"
Disagree a lot.....	1%	/	
Not sure	2%		

Table 15

Test Argument Six:

Q. M7 After World War I, the U.S. moved to try to guarantee the opportunity for a high school education to most Americans, and the result was the U.S. became the most productive economy of the 20th century. Now it's time to guarantee every qualified American access to fully-funded two years of post-high school vocational, technical or community college training so that we can start improving our competitive position in the world economy and ensure that those of our children who don't graduate from a four-year college will not be doomed to a minimum wage, no-future job for the rest of their lives.

Agree a lot	53%	\	<u>85% "Agree"</u>
Agree a little	32%	/	
Disagree a little.....	7%	\	11% "Disagree"
Disagree a lot.....	4%	/	
Not sure	4%		

Part D

Widespread Support for Guaranteeing Every Qualified American Two Years of Tuition-Free Post Secondary Education

What Americans Believe Now

Table 16

Most Americans Believe the U.S. Would Benefit A Lot in Terms of Global Economic Competition from a Major New Training and Skills Development Initiative.

Q. 4 One of the issues that has been talked about a lot in recent years is whether Americans have all the skills, education and training they need to compete in the global economy. In general, do you think the U.S. would benefit a lot; a little; or not much from a major new initiative to increase the level of training and skills development in America?

Would benefit a lot	64%	\	<u>90% “Benefit”</u>
Benefit a little	26%	/	
Benefit -- Not much	6%		
Not sure / Refused	4%		

Table 17

Americans Across-the-Board, of All Political Persuasions, Overwhelmingly Favor Two-Years of Tuition-Free Post-High School Education for All Qualified Americans

Q. 11 *After World War I, the United States became committed to the policy that all Americans should have the opportunity for a high school education. Many economists believe that policy contributed to making the United States the most productive economy in the world for much of the 20th century.*

Today, the United States is no longer the leader in providing education opportunities for young people or active workers...particularly those that did not go to college. Would you favor or oppose the government ensuring that every American – of any age -- who wanted it and had the right qualifications could get two years of post-high school education or training tuition-free?

Favor	75%
Oppose	12%
Not sure	13%

Table 18-1

Americans Across-the-Board, of All Political Persuasions, Overwhelmingly Favor Two-Years

of Tuition-Free Post-High School Education for All Qualified Americans

(By Critical Cross-Tabulations)

Q. 11 Would you favor or oppose the government ensuring that every American – of any age -- who wanted it and had the right qualifications could get two years of post-high school education or training tuition-free?

<u>Sub-Group</u>	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>
All Respondents.....	75%	12%	13%
 <u>Gender</u>			
Men	75	12	13
Women	73	14	13
 <u>Region</u>			
Northeast	77	14	10
Midwest.....	75	8	17
South	75	12	13
East.....	74	14	12

Table 18-2
(Continued)

Q. 11 Would you favor or oppose the government ensuring that every American –

of any age -- who wanted it and had the right qualifications could get two years of post-high school education or training tuition-free?

<u>Sub-Group</u>	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>
All Respondents.....	75%	12%	13%
<u>Party ID</u>			
Democrat.....	86	4	9
Independent.....	74	13	13
Republican	58	24	19
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	89	4	7
30-39	86	6	7
40-49	68	18	13
50-59	75	10	15
60+	64	15	21

Table 18-3
(Continued)

Q. 11 Would you favor or oppose the government ensuring that every American –

of any age -- who wanted it and had the right qualifications could get two years of post-high school education or training tuition-free?

<u>Sub-Group</u>	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>
All Respondents.....	75%	12%	13%
<u>Education</u>			
Some High School	71	11	17
High School Grad	90	5	5
Tech / Vocational	78	8	13
Some College	82	8	10
College grad	81	6	13
Post Grad.....	64	20	16

Table 19

Voters – by a 6-1 Margin – Indicate they would

be More Likely to Support a Candidate Who Supported Two Years of Tuition-Free Post-Secondary Education – Either at a Community College, Vocational or Hi-Tech Institute, or Apprenticeship Program – for any qualified American!!

Q. 16 Would you be more inclined or less inclined to support a party or candidate for public office who said that they would work to ensure that every American worker – of any age -- who was qualified, and every young person who graduated high school would be guaranteed full tuition for two years of post-high school education or training either at a community college, a vocational or high-tech training institute, or apprenticeship program?

More inclined to support that party or candidate	60%
Less inclined to support them	10%
Makes no difference	22%
Not sure	8%