

**JANET WU:** At this time, I would like to introduce the first candidate who will be on stage tonight, Lieutenant Governor Kerry Healey, the Republican candidate for governor. And she will have a minute to present her opening remarks. The lieutenant governor. [APPLAUSE]

**KERRY HEALEY:** Thank you, Janet, and I'd like to thank SkillWorks for holding this forum today, and also to thank you for all of your work on behalf of underserved youths and workers. It is genuinely a pleasure to be here. In my experience, there are two critical components necessary for a thriving economy. First, a stable, low-cost, pro-business tax environment; and secondly, a properly trained and educated workforce. Each is equally important to success in our economy. I often get the opportunity to talk about my roles and my concerns about reducing the tax burden on both working families and businesses, so I'm pleased to have the opportunity to come here tonight, to lay out my agenda on workforce development.

As co-chair of the state's six RCCs, or Regional Competitiveness Councils, I have a unique perspective, I believe, on the needs of each of our regions, and the regions have been brought together, both their economic development efforts and also the region's leading employers and educators, to identify gaps in workforce needs. Thank you.

**JANET WU:** Thank you very much, Lieutenant Governor. First question. There are nearly 166,000 unemployed residents in Massachusetts. The state's population is shrinking, as we have been reading and hearing, and job training resources are both insufficient and not well coordinated. The first question is, how will you make workforce development, including job training, adult basic education, ESOL, and other essential training, an integral part of your jobs and economic development strategy?

**KERRY HEALEY:** Thank you, Janet. Workforce development will be an extremely high priority for me, because I realize that it is key to the economic development of this state. I will attack the problem from two different perspectives, because I believe that there are two types of jobs that are going unfilled here in Massachusetts. First, those that demand a very high level of education in math and science, such as engineering or biotech jobs, and second, those that require less time in the classroom but nonetheless require specialized skills, such as nursing or radiation technologists or perhaps precision machinery and manufacturing jobs. We must have a strategy for both of those types of jobs.

For the first, for the high-tech types of jobs, we need to do the following. First, increase our math and science standards in our schools, including teaching engineering alongside biology, chemistry, and physics. Second, we need to upgrade our science and technology programs in our higher education institutions across the state, just as we're investing in nanotechnology at UMass currently. Next, we need to provide loan forgiveness for students who are entering key professions that are needed in our workforce here in Massachusetts, such as engineers, or nurses, or forensic lab technicians.

And then, finally, we have to look at our other, more mainstream jobs that need to be filled, and we need a different strategy for those. We need to make grants available to students wishing to train to enter high-demand fields that require only short-duration skills training, such as nurses' aides, skilled manufacturing, or pharmacy assistants. We need to clear the

adult basic education and English as a second language waitlist, and we need to enhance our 32 One Stop Career Centers that we have around the state. We're already doing a good job, but they could do better. And finally, we need to raise the mandatory age of school attendance in Massachusetts to 18 and create vocational schools and alternative schools that can meet the needs of all the kids in the Commonwealth.

**JANET WU:** Thank you very much. Now, the state's employers say there are too few qualified applicants to fill the jobs and more training resources are needed, as you have just stated. Over 73,000 jobs in Massachusetts are unfilled, many because workers don't have the right kind of training or education, as you have stated in your first answer. In your first budget as governor, will you provide a public match that will support a workforce competitiveness trust fund available to all workers and job seekers that equals the \$21 million workforce training fund that employers now support through a surcharge on unemployment taxes? And, as you know, and you've heard from the two previous speakers, that the governor, your partner, recently vetoed \$11 million for those trust funds. Would you have done the same thing?

**KERRY HEALEY:** No, I would not, and I would like to mention to you that there are a number of areas that I would like to invest in in terms of workforce development. First of all, increasing funding for adult basic education and ESOL. Second, loan forgiveness, as I mentioned, for those students entering key demand professions. Next, I would like to invest in expanding high school vocational programs and updating those programs so that they are relevant to our employers here in Massachusetts.

Next, I would like to expand science and technology programs, both in our high schools and in our institutions of higher education. And I would like to pay the teachers who specialize in math and science at a higher rate. I would also like to make sure that short-term grants are available for skills training for low-income individuals who perhaps had a debt burden that's too high for them to take out loans in order to pursue their education and to get the skills that they need.

I'd also like to expand our One-Stop job centers. They're doing a great job right now, but I would like to see them to be able to expand their efforts to integrate both homeless families and to do outreach to homeless families and to work with our jails and prisons to make sure that there's employment for those folks who are coming out of jails and prison. I also want to make sure that there's always going to be funding for the key, top priorities of our Regional Competitiveness Councils. In the past, we have done things such as the cultural internship program, out in the Berkshires, to encourage kids to stay there in the Berkshires and work in the arts. Something with an employer focus that has come out of our Regional Competitiveness Councils has been the needs survey, to find out why kids who go to Worcester schools often leave the region later, and is there a way to connect better the employers with the jobs and the kids that are coming out of those schools—

**JANET WU:** Lieutenant Governor, I'd like to interrupt for just one second. You said that you would not have vetoed the trust fund. Did you ask the governor not to veto it? Did you have a conversation with him?

**KERRY HEALEY:** I would never characterize a private discussion that I've had with the governor, but I can tell you what I would do, and I think that you can tell from the list of things that I would want to invest in that it is not in any way a reticence on my part to—

**JANET WU:** Would you be willing to support \$21 million for a workforce competitiveness trust fund?

**KERRY HEALEY:** As governor [OVERLAPPING VOICES] as long as it addresses the needs that I have outlined here. If it is investing in those priorities, yes.

**JANET WU:** You are committed to that.

**KERRY HEALEY:** If it is investing in the priorities that I've outlined.

**JANET WU:** Okay. Thank you. On to the third question. More than one million adults in Massachusetts, that's one out of every three adults, lack the skills to succeed in today's economy. 24,000 people are on waiting lists to go to GED classes or to learn English. ESOL and adult basic education need more funding to provide these services to the adults who need them. Will you as governor propose an \$8 million increase in adult basic education in your first budget as governor, and support increasing it further in subsequent years based on the state revenues and their availability? This increase will help thousands of people to get basic education and English proficiency needed to get better paying jobs and become the skilled workers that employers here in Massachusetts need.

**KERRY HEALEY:** Well, Janet, I'm glad that we finally have an easy one. The answer is yes. And, as governor, you would never have to worry about lobbying me on this particular issue. When I was younger and lived in New York City, I had the opportunity to teach English as a second language to recent immigrants, and I saw the impact that those skills had on people's lives. It was transformative. It was amazing to see what would happen. As people could speak English better, they would be able to get a job, they would be able to move better in society, and I absolutely recognized the value of having those skills for all of our workers here in Massachusetts, and I would make the necessary investment, as we have sought to do in the last two budgets, to clear those waiting lists and make sure that everyone has access.

I'd like to make one last point, which is that I believe that English as a second language—and adult basic education—needs to be taught in at least three different venues. It needs to be taught as it is now, with some of the skills training at workplaces. Some workplaces need to reach out and make that available to their workers. But it also needs to be made available through mutual assistance associations and other nonprofits that are grassroots organizations in the immigrant communities. And I would also like to see it offered in our community colleges and in our K-12 institutions that are closer to home, so that people don't have to travel so far to avail themselves of these services.

**JANET WU:** Would you be willing to go even further and propose more than an \$8 million increase for our job training?

**KERRY HEALEY:** We have in the past and I would again, yes.

**JANET WU:** And do you see that rising each year if the state revenues are available?

**KERRY HEALEY:** I would like to make sure that every year we have enough money in this budget so that we do not have a waiting list. That would be my goal.

**JANET WU:** OK, thanks very much, Lieutenant Governor, you can now have two minutes for your closing remarks.

**KERRY HEALEY:** Thank you, Janet. Thank you for moderating this today, and I want to thank SkillWorks again for having all the candidates here to speak a little bit about workforce development. Creating a stable, low-cost tax environment and a proper workforce development plan really is the key to economic prosperity here in Massachusetts. There are many jobs left unfilled here right now because we are not properly connecting our businesses with our schools and our institutions of higher learning. The groundwork is already being laid to correct this problem. The Regional Competitiveness Councils have begun building bridges between the businesses and the schools to identify the gaps and leads that the employers have.

We've also expanded our One-Stop Career Centers and made them much more capable of reaching out to deal with folks who have recently lost their jobs or who are underemployed. And now we are reaching out to the homeless and also to those who are reentering society from jail or prison. I would like to see that expanded.

And next we need to tackle our own complacency and admit that we are falling behind internationally, that we cannot hope to be competitive unless we raise the standards in our schools, both K-12 and in higher education. And we need to admit that our dropout rate is too high. It's unacceptable, and we need to change the structures of our schools so that our schools serve all the kids of Massachusetts, up to age 18, whatever their needs may be. And we need to make sure that our institutions of higher education work hand in hand with our businesses to produce the finest workforce in the country, and one of the finest workforces in the world. And we need to make higher education and job training affordable to those who need it most. As governor, I believe we can do this, and we will do it, because I have the experience and the desire to meet these needs. Thank you very much. [APPLAUSE]