

# U.S. Rep. Grothman: Highlights the benefits of apprenticeships

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(Washington, D.C.) – This week, at a House Education and Labor Committee hearing, Congressman Glenn Grothman (R-Glenbeulah) spoke with experts about the skilled labor shortage and the benefits of encouraging high school students to pursue careers in the skilled labor market. Oftentimes students are misinformed and encouraged to get a traditional four-year degree, when pursuing a trade will enable them to acquire a high-paying job without a mountain of debt.

Witnesses included:

- [Ms. Jennifer Carlson](#)
- [Mr. James G. Pavesic](#)
- [Mr. Mark Hays](#)
- [Ms. Bridget Gainer](#)

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## **Excerpts of Grothman's questioning**

**Congressman Grothman:** "I do have apprenticeship programs in my district, the carpenters, the operating engineers, pipefitters, that sort of thing. All very impressive and all share something in common, they can't find enough people. And employers around my district can't find enough people. I'll ask you guys, is there anywhere in the country where you really have enough people in these fields or is the nationwide problem that these well-paid professions can't find people to fill them? [panel shakes heads 'no']. Can you suggest what we can do to get the word out to people at age 16 or 17 about how much more money they can make and how

much less in debt they will be, not to mention, I think, more job security?"

**Mr. Pavesic:** *"I believe that where the real answer is, is to the guidance counselors that are in high schools. And the biggest part of that, Congressman, is that their evaluations are based on how many children they send to college. Whether they spend one day in college or they go the entire time. That's how their evaluations are based. They should be based on if they've send someone to post-secondary education systems, whether it's an apprenticeship or college. We try to talk to guidance counselors, we attend the guidance counselor's conferences, and when they see our model, they think it's a great model. Especially the fact that they can receive college credits while they earn and learn but it just seems like that message isn't getting down to the student or the parents."*

**Ms. Carlson** *"I think it is correct that we have to look at what the guidance counselors are doing, and how they're establishing it, I think that from a national advertising campaign we need to destigmatize what an apprenticeship is."*

**Grothman:** *"I think it's destigmatized among most people. I think the problem is that a lot of guidance counselors almost make things worse. Do you think that's true?"*

**Carlson:** *"I do know that they are incentivized to put people into college degrees and that our sector's technology is equally as much in-demand looking for people to fill the jobs as the trades are and that wages in both industries can end up looking the same within five years without the benefit of a degree."*

**Grothman:** *"One of the things I think is very illuminating is when I hear from people in the trades or people in tech schools talking about people who got a degree that didn't lead to a skill coming back when they're 28, 29, 33, 34 [years old] and getting a skill they could have had when they were 20 years old and they've been losing out on compensation for 13 or 14 years, not to mention frequently harnessed with a big debt as well. Do you folks find that true around the country? Where people are getting involved with these programs much later than they could have?"*

**Mr. Hays:** *"Absolutely. I think that we see it all the time. Students coming back to, for whatever reason can't find work in the area they originally studied or got bored or tired of it and wanted to try something new. It's pretty significant in our system."*

**Pavesic:** *“What I would say is that we see more and more applicants that come into our program that have four-year degrees just for the exact same reason, they cannot find a worthwhile job and they need to pay off their debt. And all of them, after they get into the apprenticeship program, say the same thing, that they wish they would have done that earlier. And that could also help somewhat, too, to fund some more vocational classes in high schools so that these individuals can see that there are other jobs in IT jobs, plumbers, pipefitters, welders, that are available to them.”*

**Grothman:** “I’m not sure it’s the federal government’s role, but I do see in my area that the more on-the-ball- school districts are beginning to do things to get people acquainted with these skills in high school. I know they’re doing it more in Wisconsin, maybe because we’re a heavy manufacturing state, got a lot of good construction outfits, but is this something that you’ve seen more nationwide? More of the high schools being on-the-ball and realizing that we can get people on the road to these apprenticeships when you are in high school?”

**Hays:** *“I think we can start younger, certainly.”*

[Click here](#) to view Grothman’s full remarks.

### **Additional Information**

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