TWO ROADS VOL. 44

THE OCCUPATIONS ISSUE PART 2






Part 2 Table of Contents

Part 2 Table of Contents	2
Chicago Sceneries	3
Drywall Installers, Ceiling Tile Installers, and Tapers	4
Flooring Installers and Tile and Stone Setters	5
Hazardous Materials Removal Workers	6
Insulation Workers	7
Ironworkers	8
Masonry Workers	9
Construction and Maintenance Painters	10
Message	11
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	12
Roofers	13
Sheet Metal Workers	14
My Work Plans: I have Options - Patrick Lynn Johnson	15
There is a Profession in Here Somewhere - Bobby Luga	17
Message	18
Law Feature: Civil Rights in the United States - Patrick Lynn Johnson	19
Kinda Desperate - Anonymous	21
Overwhelmed With Options – Steven “Lo” London	22
Fair Labor in the United States: The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 - Patrick Lynn Johnson	23
Content Creator - Jovanni "Kanelo" Gonzalez	25
The Labor Market For People With Conviction Histories: An Examination of Access To Good Jobs – Vera Institute	26
Issue Meme	46
Find Two Roads Online	47
Two Roads Art	48



IN A MINUTE…



DRYWALL INSTALLERS, CEILING TILE INSTALLERS, AND TAPERS

WHAT DRYWALL INSTALLERS, CEILING TILE INSTALLERS, AND TAPERS DO.
Drywall installers and ceiling tile installers hang wallboard and install ceiling tile inside buildings. Tapers prepare the wallboard for painting, using tape and other materials. Many workers both install and tape wallboard.

WORK ENVIRONMENT.
Drywall installers, ceiling tile installers, and tapers work indoors. The work is physically demanding. Workers spend most of the day standing, bending, or reaching, and they must often lift and maneuver heavy wallboard.

HOW TO BECOME A DRYWALL INSTALLER, CEILING TILE INSTALLER, OR TAPER.
Most drywall installers, ceiling tile installers, and tapers learn their trade on the job. A formal educational credential is typically not required to enter the occupation.

PAY.
The median annual wage for drywall, ceiling tile installers, and tapers was $50,440.00 in May 2022.

JOB OUTLOOK.
Overall employment of drywall installers, ceiling tile installers, and tapers is projected to show little or no change from 2022 to 2032. Despite limited employment growth, about 9,000 openings for drywall installers, ceiling tile installers, and tapers are projected each year, on average, over the decade.

ADVANCEMENT.
Drywall installers, cleaning tile installers, and tapers may advance to become supervisors, general superintendents, project managers, or estimators. Workers may also choose to start their own business after gaining experience in the occupation. Workers who join a union may also find career advancement opportunities within their union, such as becoming a business manager for a local chapter or becoming an instructor for the apprenticeship program.

CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION.
Association of the Wall and Ceiling Industry.

LET'S GET TO WORK

FLOORING INSTALLERS AND TILE AND STONE SETTERS

WHAT FLOORING INSTALLERS AND TILE AND STONE SETTERS DO.
Flooring installers and tile and stone setters lay and finish carpet, wood, vinyl, and other materials, such as ceramic, glass, marble, and granite.

WORK ENVIRONMENT.
Installing flooring, tile, and stone is physically demanding, requiring workers to spend much of their time reaching, bending, and kneeling. Workers typically wear kneepads while kneeling; safety goggles when using grinders, saws, and sanders; and dust masks or respirator systems to prevent inhaling work-generated dust in enclosed areas with poor ventilation.

HOW TO BECOME A FLOORING INSTALLER OR TILE AND STONE SETTER.
Flooring installers and tile and stone setters typically need no formal education. They learn their trade on the job, sometimes as a helper.

PAY.
The median annual wage for flooring installers and tile and stone setters was $47,890.00 in May 2022.

JOB OUTLOOK.
Overall employment of flooring installers and tile and stone setters is projected to grow 3 percent from 2022 to 2032, about as fast as the average for all occupations. About 9,800 openings for flooring installers and tile and stone setters are projected each year, on average, over the decade.

EMPLOYMENT.
Projected employment of flooring installers and tile and stone setters varies by occupation. The construction of new homes and the renovation of existing units will be the primary source of flooring and tile and stone installation over the projected decade. Vinyl and other resilient flooring products have become increasingly popular, especially in homes, which will lead to employment growth for floor layers. Tile and stone installation will continue to be common for bathrooms, restaurants, and other buildings, supporting demand for these workers.

LET'S GET TO WORK

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS REMOVAL WORKERS

WHAT HAZARDOUS MATERIALS REMOVAL WORKERS.
Hazardous materials (hazmat) removal workers identify and dispose of harmful substances, such as asbestos, lead, mold, and radioactive waste. They also neutralize and clean up materials that are flammable, corrosive, or toxic.

WORK ENVIRONMENT.
Work environments for hazmat removal workers vary. Completing projects may require night and weekend work. Overtime is common for some workers, particularly for those who respond to emergencies or disasters.

HOW TO BECOME A HAZARDOUS MATERIALS REMOVAL WORKER.
Hazmat removal workers typically need a high school diploma and are trained on the job. Workers may complete training that follows Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards. Some hazmat removal workers need federally or state-mandated training, licensing, or permits, depending on the type of waste remediation.

PAY.
The median annual wage for hazardous materials removal workers was $46,690.00 in May 2022.

JOB OUTLOOK.
Employment of hazardous materials removal workers is projected to show little or no change from 2022 to 2032. Despite limited growth, about 5,200 openings for hazardous materials removal workers are projected each year, on average, over the decade.

ADVANCEMENT.
Hazmat removal workers may advance to become a supervisor after gaining experience and completing additional training, such as the OSHA HAZWOPER supervisor training. Workers also may advance to different positions within their industry, such as a radiation safety technician, later becoming a supervisor in the nuclear power industry. After gaining experience, workers also may choose to start their own hazmat removal business.

CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION.
Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

LET'S GET TO WORK

INSULATION WORKERS

WHAT INSULATION WORKERS DO.
Insulation workers, also called *insulators,* install and replace the materials used to insulate buildings or mechanical systems.

WORK ENVIRONMENT.
Insulators generally work indoors. Mechanical insulators work both indoors and outdoors, sometimes in extreme temperatures. They spend most of their workday standing, bending, or kneeling, often in confined spaces.

HOW TO BECOME AN INSULATION WORKER.
Floor, ceiling, and wall insulators typically learn their trade on the job. Mechanical insulators may complete an apprenticeship program after earning a high school diploma or equivalent.

PAY.
The median annual wage for insulation workers, floor, ceiling, and wall was $45,380.00 in May 2022. The median annual wage for mechanical insulation workers was $59,590.00 in May 2022.

JOB OUTLOOK.
Overall employment of insulation workers is projected to grow 2 percent from 2022 to 2032, about as fast as the average for all occupations. About 4,800 openings for insulation workers are projected each year, on average, over the decade.

ADVANCEMENT.
After completing an apprenticeship, mechanical insulators reach journey-level status. After becoming journey workers, mechanical insulators may advance to supervisor or superintendent positions, or they may choose to start their own business offering mechanical insulation services.

CONTACTS FOR MORE INFORMATION.
National Insulation Association.
International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers.
North American Building Trades Union.
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

IRONWORKERS

WHAT IRONWORKERS DO.
Iron workers install structural and reinforcing iron and steel to form and support bridges, roads, and structures.

WORK ENVIRONMENT.
Ironworkers usually work outside in many types of weather. Some work at great heights. Their tasks are physically demanding, as they spend much of their time moving and stooping to carry, bend, cut, and connect iron or steel at a steady pace so projects stay on schedule

HOW TO BECOME AN IRONWORKER.
Most ironworkers learn through an apprenticeship or on-the-job training.

PAY.
The median annual wage for reinforcing iron and rebar workers was $51,070.00 in May 2022. The median annual wage for structural iron and steel workers was $60,500.00 in May 2022.

JOB OUTLOOK.
Overall employment of ironworkers is projected to grow 2 percent from 2022 to 2032, about as fast as the average for all occupations.

ADVANCEMENT.
After gaining experience, ironworkers may advance to become a supervisor or a manager, a position in which they have more responsibilities and are tasked with directing other ironworkers.

EDUCATION.
A high school diploma or equivalent is generally required to enter an apprenticeship. Workers learning through on-the-job training may not need a high school diploma or equivalent. Courses in math, as well as training in vocational subjects such as blueprint reading and welding, are useful.

CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION.
American Welding Society.
8

LET'S GET TO WORK

MASONRY WORKERS

WHAT MASONRY WORKERS DO.
Masonry workers, also known as *masons*, use bricks, concrete, and concrete blocks, and natural and manmade stones to build walkways, walls, and other structures.

WORK ENVIRONMENT.
As with many other constructions, masonry work is strenuous. Masons often lift heavy materials and stand, kneel, and bend for long periods. The work may be either indoors or outdoors in areas that are dusty, dirty, or muddy. Inclement weather may affect outdoor masonry work.

HOW TO BECOME A MASONRY WORKER.
Masons typically need a high school diploma or equivalent and learn either through an apprenticeship or on the job.

PAY.
The median annual wage for masonry workers was $49,490.00 in May 2022.

JOB OUTLOOK.
Overall employment of masonry workers is projected to decline 3 percent from 2022 to 2032. Despite declining employment, about 21,200 openings for masonry workers are projected each year, on average, over the decade.

ADVANCEMENT.
After becoming a journey worker, masonry workers may find opportunities to advance to supervisor, superintendent, or other construction management positions. Experienced masonry workers may choose to become independent contractors. Masonry workers in a union may also find opportunities for advancement within their union.

CONTACTS FOR MORE INFORMATION.
Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc.
Bricklayers and Allied Craftsworkers International Union.
Home Builders Institute.
International Masonry Institute.
Mason Contractors Association of America.

LET'S GET TO WORK

CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE PAINTERS

WHAT CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE WORKERS DO.
Painters apply paint, stain, and coatings to walls and ceilings, buildings, large machinery and equipment, and bridges and other structures.

WORK ENVIRONMENT.
Painters work indoors and outdoors. Painting is physically demanding and requires a lot of bending, kneeling, reaching, and climbing. Those who paint buildings or bridges may work at extreme heights or in uncomfortable positions.

HOW TO BECOME A CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE WORKER.
Painters typically learn their trade on the job. No formal education is typically required to enter the occupation.

PAY.
The median annual wage for construction and maintenance painters was $46,090.00 in May 2022.

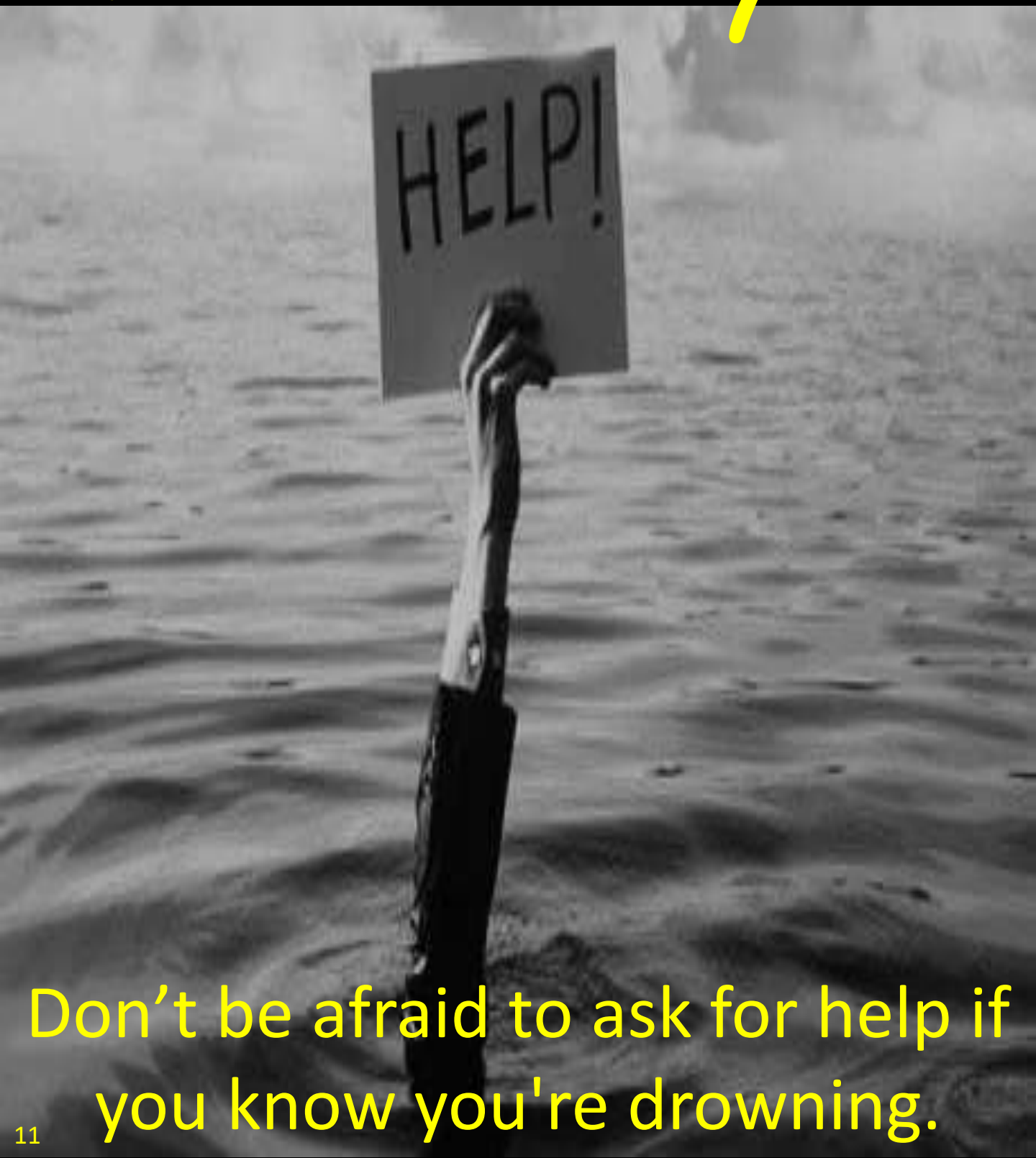
JOB OUTLOOK.
Employment of construction and maintenance painters is projected to show little or no change from 2022 to 2032. Despite limited employment growth, about 29,300 openings for construction and maintenance painters are projected each year, on average, over the decade.

ADVANCEMENT.
After gaining experience, painters may advance to supervisors, superintendents, or managers, directing other painters on the jobsite. Painters may also work as estimators or start their own business. Painters who work in a union may have advancement opportunities within the organization as a union official, training instructor, or business manager.

CONTACTS FOR MORE INFORMATION.
International Union of Painters and Allied Trades.
Painting and Decorating Contractors of America.

LET'S GET TO WORK

MESSAGE



Don’t be afraid to ask for help if you know you're drowning.

PLUMBERS, PIPEFITTERS, AND STEAMFITTERS

WHAT PLUMBERS, PIPEFITTERS, AND STEAMFITTERS DO.
Plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters install and repair piping fixtures and systems.

WORK ENVIRONMENT.
Plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters work in factories, homes, businesses, and other places where there are pipes and related systems. Plumbers are often on call for emergencies, so evening and weekend work is common.

HOW TO BECOME A PLUMBER, PIPEFITTER, OR STEAMFITTER.
Most plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters learn on the job through an apprenticeship. Some attend vocational-technical school before receiving on-the-job training. Most states require plumbers to be licensed.

PAY.
The median annual wage for plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitter was $60,090.00 in May 2022.

JOB OUTLOOK.
Employment of plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters is projected to grow 2 percent from 2022 to 2032, about as fast as the average for all occupations. About 42,600 openings for plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters are projected each year, on average, over the decade.

ADVANCEMENT.
After completing an apprenticeship and becoming licensed at the journey level, plumbers may advance to become a master plumber, supervisor, or project manager. Some plumbers choose to start their own business as an independent contractor, which may require additional licensing.

CONTACTS FOR MORE INFORMATION.
Mechanical Contractors Association of America.
Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors Association.
United Association: Union of Plumbers, Fitters, Welders, and Service Techs.
Home Builders Institute.
Plumbing Heating Cooling Contractors Association.
National Building Trades Union.

ROOFERS

WHAT ROOFERS DO.
Roofers replace, repair, and install the roofs of buildings, using a variety of materials, including shingles, bitumen, and metal.

WORK ENVIRONMENT.
Roofing work is physically demanding because it involves climbing, bending, kneeling, and heavy lifting. Roofers may work overtime in order to finish a particular job, especially during busy summer months.

HOW TO BECOME A ROOFER.
THERE ARE TYPICALLY NO FORMAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR ROOFERS. Although most roofers learn on the job, some enter the occupation through an apprenticeship.

PAY.
The median annual wage for roofers was $47,920.00 in May 2022.

JOB OUTLOOK.
Employment of roofers is projected to grow 2 percent from 2022 to 2032, about as fast as the average for all occupations.

ADVANCEMENT.
After gaining experience in the occupation, roofers may have opportunities to advance to become a supervisor, job superintendent, or estimator or to start their own business. Roofers working in a union may advance within their local union to become a business manager or apprenticeship instructor or to other positions of union leadership.

CONTACTS FOR MORE INFORMATION.
National Roofing Contractors Association.
United Union of Roofers, Waterproofers & Allied Workers.
Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

SHEET METAL WORKERS

WHAT SHEET METAL WORKERS DO.
Sheet metal workers fabricate or install products that are made from thin metal sheets.

WORK ENVIRONMENT.
Sheet metal workers often lift heavy materials and stand for long periods of time. Those who install sheet metal must often bend, climb, and squat. Most work full time.

HOW TO BECOME A SHEET METAL WORKER.
Sheet metal workers employed in construction typically learn their trade through an apprenticeship. Those employed in manufacturing typically learn on the job or at a technical school.

PAY.
The median annual wage for sheet metal workers was $55,350.00 in May 2022.

JOB OUTLOOK.
Employment of sheet metal workers is projected to show little or no change from 2022 to 2032. Despite limited employment growth, about 11,400 openings for sheet metalworkers are projected each year, on average, over the decade.

EMPLOYMENT.
There will be continuing need to install and maintain energy-efficient HVAC systems in new and existing buildings over the projected decade. However, the use of prefabricated duct systems will limit the need for sheet metal workers on residential construction sites. Some sheet metal fabrication equipment is automated, further reducing the need for workers outside of construction.

CONTACTS FOR MORE INFORMATION.
International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART).
International Training Institute for the Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Industry.
Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors' National Association.
American Welding Society.
Fabricators & Manufacturers Association, International.
International Certification Board.

LET'S GET TO WORK

My Work *Plans*: I have options.

By: Patrick Lynn Johnson

You will notice that the subtitle of this article has the words “options” in it. Let me provide some background information for you so that you can understand exactly what I meant. Over the last three decades of my incarceration, I have had many thoughts about what I would do with my life if I ever got the chance to be free. I have read books on every subject from real estate to day trading. There was never a real need to focus on any particular subject because my out date was too far in the future to deal with that. To tell the whole truth I was genuinely interested in those subjects, but I was also trying to eat up the clock. Books helped me to achieve both of those goals.

Let us fast-forward a few decades. Now my chances of a transfer to an Adult Transition Center (work release center) are realer and closer than ever. By my calculation, and I have agonized over the proper calculation of that period, ii is mid-2027. Shit is real, ya’ll. I am at the door. Getting to this point has compelled me to narrow down my work options. Two overriding objectives guided my decision-making process. First was being realistic. What was I able to do after all the years I spent inside? Next was how would I acquire the skills and knowledge to ensure that I could enter the professions I was interested in?

Enter Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center. I know some of ya’ll feel like we at Kewanee be puttin’ on when we talk about the benefits we derive from this institution but that is not true. The many benefits and opportunities are real and exploitable (get here!). In any case, I have elected to focus on three areas of work: commercial driving, welding, and business management. I will explain as briefly as I can. Bear with me, ya’ll. I’ma get to the point.

Truck driving is one of the most felon-friendly occupations in America and is one of a few professions that allow a felon to earn 40-60 thousand dollars a year fresh home. I have chosen to attend truck-driving school when I get to work release so that I can acquire my commercial driver’s license. Now being in work release means I cannot leave state lines, but I can still drive locally and make a substantial sum in that 1.5 years I have to be in work release before I transition to Mandatory Supervised Release. At Kewanee, we have a CDL study group, CDL business class, and CDL simulator that helps to prepare one for a career in commercial driving. I plan to get that truck-driving money, ya’ll.

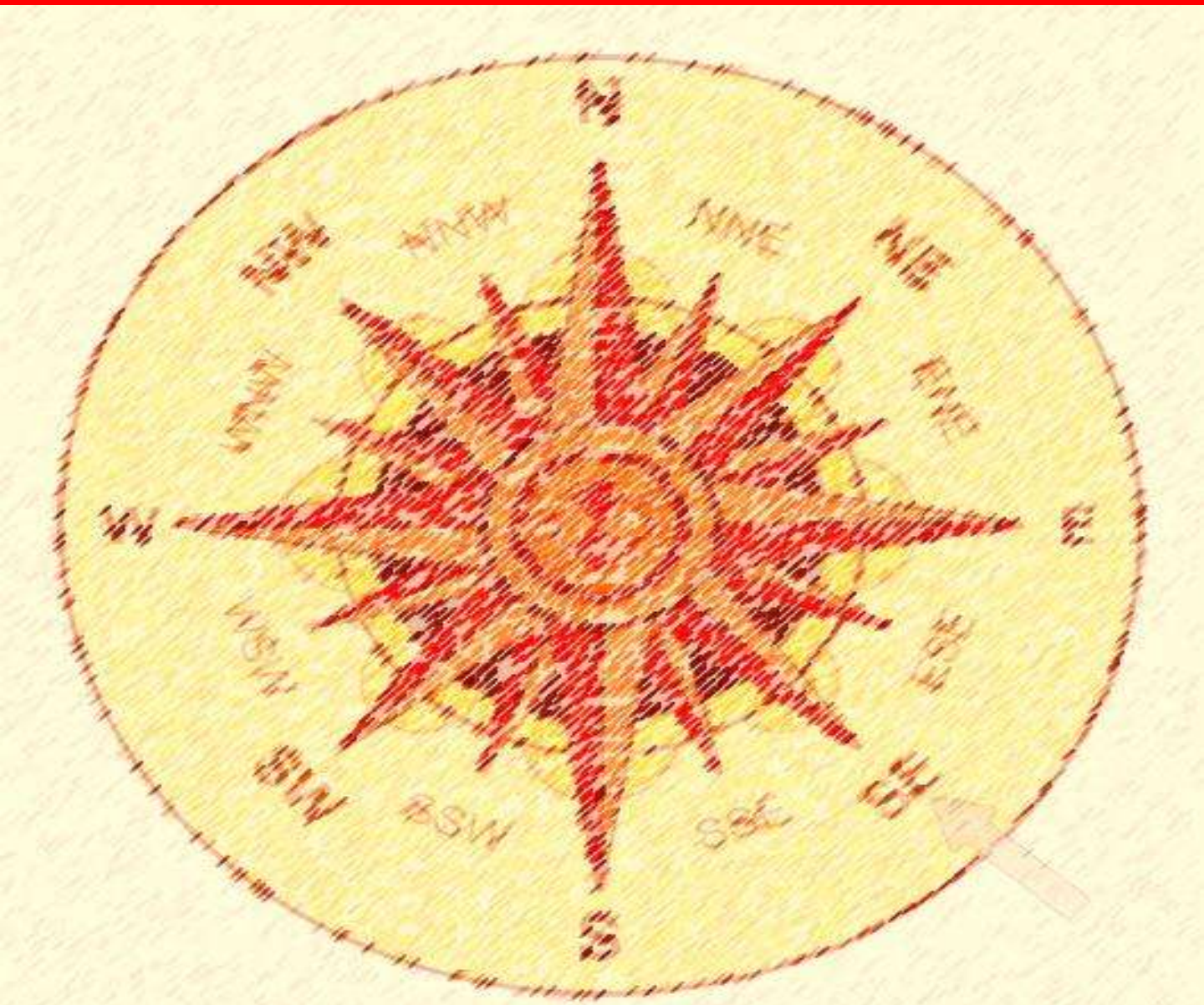
Illinois Correctional Industries has a Welding Program at Kewanee. I started in late July 2026. I am on schedule to complete that program in January 2027. Welding is a skill that I can use as a second job. They make $25.00+ per hour as a starting wage in Illinois.

Next is business management. I have enrolled in Lewis University’s Bachelor Degree program. Successful completion of the program results in a bachelor’s degree with a major in professional studies and a minor in business administration. The acquisition of this

business degree will allow me to transition into a management position in the business world. By the time I get to work release I will be about halfway to my bachelor's degree. This means that I can finish my bachelor studies by the time I transition from work release to MSR (online classes and CLEP courses).

At this point though, the transition plan (the re-entry center to work release center phase) is to drive trucks full time and weld part time (or vice versa; whichever proves more profitable). After spending a year and a half in work release and saving money for that period, I will transition to the MSR phase. This phase will create opportunities I will be able to exploit in light of my having my bachelor's degree and more freedom of movement.

These are my employment plans for the next four years. I'ma get it, ya'll. E'thing!



LET'S GET TO WORK

There is a Profession in Here Somewhere
By: Bobby Luga

I came to the Illinois Department of Corrections at the age of 22 with few skills developed from the jobs I had worked during my youth; none was exactly career worthy. During the time I was in Dixon C.C., I was introduced to the electrical trade. I found out how much money the Electricians were making and my curiosity was instantly piqued. I knew nothing of value to the trade so my first day working with the Electricians I asked if I could bring a book back to study. They looked at me oddly, as this was not the normal nature of previous workers. My interest was genuine, so that afternoon I left with the Electricity 101 textbook. I spent most of the night studying that text only to come to work the next day with more questions. “What’s this?” and “How does this work?” was the theme of many of the days to follow. Sometimes they would get frustrated with me and tell me that I was overcomplicating things, but at the end of the day, they were both very helpful.

The love of electrical work led me to a job working in the Optical Lab. I would maintain, troubleshoot, and fix the machinery there. This is where I found some more challenging obstacles. These machines used electricity and pneumatics to run, so troubleshooting them involved knowledge of multiple systems. With my curiosity piqued again I took machine manual after machine manual back to the housing unit night after night to study. What I did not expect was that sometimes it was not a hardware issue that was the point of failure, sometimes it was a software issue. This led me down a new rabbit hole. I learned bits and pieces about how these machines communicated with one another and network management. Eventually I came to realize that our entire system was created by some very talented tech guys who worked there before me, now I wanted to understand how **this** system was created, how it worked. It was back to the drawing board for me with new books to study, but this time I had no one to guide me. The complexity of these issues was beyond those around me; my curiosity went unanswered.

When I transferred to Kewanee Life Skills Reentry Center, I took a couple of courses on financial literacy with Mr. Price as well as a peer-led course. These educational opportunities opened my eye to the possibility of becoming a day trader. I have immersed myself in Technical Analysis books and videos ever since. Analyzing market structure has started to make sense; if combined with computer algorithms in the right way I believe I can eventually create a profitable trading bot. This is just one of my future goals.

Today I am sure that I want to work with my hands, likely troubleshooting systems when I get out, but I am not sure what those systems will be yet. Are they going to be electrical, pneumatic, a combination or both, or something more complex like AI Automation software? Maybe my curiosity will be piqued to try something else. Time will tell. I am sure of two things though: The world will never be short of opportunities that will pique my interest and that I will be able to support myself financially with whatever skillset I choose to practice when I get out.



WHAT THAT EXPRESSWAY RIDE TO THE CITY LOOKS LIKE

Law Feature: Civil Rights in the United States

By: Patrick Lynn Johnson

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. Section 2000e-2 (a) (1), makes it unlawful for an employer to "fail or refuse to hire or to discharge any individual, or otherwise to discriminate against any individual with respect to his/her compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment , because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin." This statutory text establishes two elements for an employment discrimination case: (1) the plaintiff suffered an adverse employment action (2) because of the employee's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

Title VII has some limitations that must be borne in mind if a proper understanding of the law is to be achieved. As noted by the United States Supreme Court in Griggs vs. Duke Power Co., 401 U.S. 424, 429, 91 S.Ct. 849 (1971): "Congress did not intend by Title VII, however, to guarantee a job to every person regardless of qualifications. In short, the Act does not command that any person be hired simply because he was formerly the subject of discrimination, or because he is a member of a minority group. Discriminatory preference for any group, minority of majority, is precisely and only what Congress has proscribed. What is required by Congress is the removal of artificial, arbitrary, and unnecessary barriers to employment when the barriers operate invidiously to discriminate on the basis of racial or other impermissible classification."

An obvious incident of illegal and unconstitutional discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is as follows. John Doe, an able-bodied, educationally qualified African-American man of 45 years applies for a job as a health services manager at a hospital in Peoria, Illinois. The application is submitted along with ten (10) other men who are not educationally qualified to hold the position. In spite of John Doe's uncontested qualification for the position, the hospital declines to hire him and instead hires a white male who is admittedly unqualified for the job. Upon learning that he was skipped over for an unqualified white male, John Doe files a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

While the case of John Doe is fictitious, it is an example of how a violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 can occur. There are certainly cases of discrimination that are not as clear-cut as the John Doe example. In such cases, it becomes necessary for the party that believes he or she has suffered discrimination to launch a legal attack on the person, people, or entity who has committed the wrong in an effort to vindicate the unconstitutional act.

The Civil Rights Act did not just state what the law was meant to prevent. It also enunciated a mechanism designed to allow those who believe their constitutional rights were being infringed upon to bring that issue to the newly created Equal Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The EEOC was a congressionally created governmental body tasked with addressing claims filed under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The EEOC has two main objectives. First, tha agency has the responsibility of adjudicating whether the facts of cases exhibit a violation of Title VII. The second duty the EEOC has is determining the appropriate disciplinary action to be taken in the event of a violation of the Act.

The Human Resources of the Act are stark and undeniable. Employers have the legal obligation to ensure that their companies are not overtly or inadvertently engaging in activities that constitute violations of the Act. The obligation that companies have to prevent discriminatory actions, if performed the way the Act intended, could result in companies having diverse workforces drawn from a cross-section of the American public.

In this sense, the spirit and purpose of the original Act is one that can make the American workforce truly representative of the actual country. The consequences of companies *not* following the specific dictates of the Act means that a preferred demographic (or demographics) is allowed to prosper while other demographics are denied equal opportunities.

"TITLE VII OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964, 42 U.S.C. SECTION 2000E-2 (A) (1), MAKES IT UNLAWFUL FOR AN EMPLOYER TO "FAIL OR REFUSE TO HIRE OR TO DISCHARGE ANY INDIVIDUAL, OR OTHERWISE TO DISCRIMINATE AGAINST ANY INDIVIDUAL WITH RESPECT TO HIS/HER COMPENSATION, TERMS, CONDITIONS, OR PRIVILEGES OF EMPLOYMENT , BECAUSE OF SUCH INDIVIDUAL'S RACE, COLOR, RELIGION, SEX, OR NATIONAL ORIGIN." THIS STATUTORY TEXT ESTABLISHES TWO ELEMENTS FOR AN EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION CASE: (1) THE PLAINTIFF SUFFERED AN ADVERSE EMPLOYMENT ACTION (2) BECAUSE OF THE EMPLOYEE'S RACE, COLOR, RELIGION, SEX, OR NATIONAL ORIGIN."

Kinda Desperate
By: Anonymous

So, this article is a little hard for me to write. First, I feel a little unprepared. I have been locked up for 12 years. I have not taken advantage of any of the programs that have been available to me. All I have been doing is yard, gym, and the wings. Now I am a little over a year away from going home, and I do not know what I will do for work. I do not know where I am gonna get a job.

As far as education is concerned, all I have is a G.E.D. I have never gone to college or trade school, and I do not know how to do anything. When I think about work all I can think of is maybe a factory job or working in a restaurant. I do not know what else I can do. I find myself in that situation.

I am feeling two different emotions because of the situation I find myself in. First, I am ashamed that I did not take advantage of opportunities I had to program and go to school. Now I am in a tight spot. That is the reason why I am writing this article anonymously. Next, I am regretful. I wish I could go back and change some things. That is not the way life works though.

The real reason I am writing this article for *Two Roads* is to give advice to people in the joints all over the state. I really want to advise people to NOT do what I did. Please take advantage of programs. It does not matter whether it's state-provided programming or self-programming with Edovo. Learn as much as you can before your outdate comes, so that you will be ready for your outdate.

Do not make the mistakes I made. Learn from my actions, or more accurately, my inactions. If you don't you will find yourself on the way home without the ability to do any job. To tell the truth, I feel desperate because I am not prepared for going home. How am I gonna take care of myself if I can't get a job because I don't have any skills? I do not have an answer to that question. I am scared as hell! I am not ready to go home but my outdate is coming fast.





Overwhelmed With Options

By Steven "Lo" London

One of the hardest things for me to do anymore is daydream; sad but true. Back in the early 2,000's, when I began serving this three-decade sentence I recall being able to fantasize and dream about regaining my freedom vividly. I used to know back then exactly what I was going to do the moment I was given a chance. Now I don't mean to be dreary, but it seems as the decades have passed, I've spent so much time working so many different jobs and gaining so many occupational skills, that I can't tell what the future holds in store for me, or specifically what I want to do. Also, by being in these classrooms, completing program after program and receiving bunches and bunches of certifications, I'll tell anyone reading this along with anybody who wants to listen, I sure as hell know for a certainty that I don't have any more time to devote to imprisonment. So, what does this translate to for me? I really do not care what job I have or what city or state I live in; I will be free much sooner than later, and I find myself overwhelmed with occupational options. I'm not going to lie; it's a wonderful feeling!

It is my hope that the men and women serving time in Illinois prisons don't believe that their time spent working in prison has been in vain. If you aren't aware, employers, as well as many educators, commonly accept that the time one spends learning during their lifetime absolutely holds value! When I was doing maximum security prison time back in the day at Menard Correctional Center, I was one hell of a janitor. I went on to learn how to maintain waxed floors, paint, and even perform minor preventative maintenance on plumbing.

Eventually I moved on from that sort of strenuous manual labor and began a fairly long journey practicing the trade of tailoring clothing. Without a doubt, I can see the value in possessing these skills; I often imagine myself performing clothing alterations as at least a profitable side-hustle. I have even considered the power of donating my time and resources towards organizations like the Salvation Army or Goodwill Industries, in an effort to bring previously loved articles of clothing back to life for the people who can't afford to pop tags and try to keep up with the Joneses.

The point I'm trying to make is that I don't believe there's any harm in using prison time to learn new occupational trade skills. All I've done by staying busy, working, and seeking education is given myself a ton of options I will use upon release from IDOC to ensure I never see the inside of a prison cell again. It's great to be overwhelmed with options.

FAIR LABOR IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: THE FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT OF 1938

By: Patrick Lynn Johnson

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) establishes minimum wage, overtime pay, recordkeeping, and child labor standards affecting full and part-time workers in the private sector and in federal, state, and local government.

The history of workers generally, but those in the United States in particular, is full of instances where the employers, in whatever form they appeared, abused the employed, normally poor and societally and politically disenfranchised. The abuse and exploitation of workers and wage earners, in the context of finance and economy, was normally for the purpose of naked profit at the expense of wage earners.

There has historically been a contradiction in the objectives of those who own the modes of production and those who have to sell their labor for pay. This history is the background to the existence of the FLSA. Because workers could not depend on owners willingly treating them fairly in terms of working conditions, wages and subsidiary issues, it became necessary for the government to step in with laws and regulations mandating fair treatment, wages, and conditions.

It should be pointed out, however, that the government was compelled by mass political activity to address the problems posed by working conditions. There was no “let’s do right by workers because it is the right thing to do” moment. There was struggle involved. The struggle was not always peaceful either. Workers had to fight, figuratively and literally, for their interests.

The FLSA is a law that addresses a number of specific issues related to a broad range of subject matters. First among them is a basic wage standard. Covered, nonexempt workers are statutorily entitled to a $7.25 per hour minimum wage. In addition to the minimum wage nonexempt provision of law, workers are entitled to pay for overtime work of at least one and a half times their specific regular rate of pay. This rule applies when the individual worker works more than 40 hours in a full workweek.

The FLSA was a watershed moment in United States jurisprudence and culture (labor, political, social and economic). The Act specifically covered “[a]ll employees of certain enterprises having workers engaged in interstate commerce, or handling, selling, or otherwise working on goods or materials that have been moved in or produced for such commerce by any person.” American workers were identified and protected by the passage of the Act.

In addition to the above, the Act also addresses subjects as comprehensive as tips, facilities, subminimum wage provisions, youth minimum wage, child labor, and exemptions. The FLSA gives to the United States Department of Labor express and explicit power to recover back wages and an equal amount in liquidated damages where wage and overtime violations exist.

These administrative provisions of law are one of the many that deal with enforcement of the FLSA. There are investigative and judicial tools and remedies available to the American worker that show the law is a serious legislative effort to protect the substantive interests of the wage earner.

An example of a violation of the FLSA is an employer asks an employee to work in excess of 40 hours in a week but refuses to pay the employee overtime pay. In such a scenario the employee may file a formal complaint with the U.S. Department of Labor to obtain the payment of unpaid overtime compensation owed to him or her. The human resource implications of this fictional scenario are that there are laws in place designed to protect the American worker and procedures to enforce said laws. The modern-day American worker is in a much superior position than pre-FLSA generations.

FAIR LABOR LAW

LAW FEATURE

Content Creator
Jovanni “Kanelo” Gonzalez

One thing we can all agree on is that re-entering society after doing time will not be easy. What if I told you there is a way for you to make money telling your story or sharing your life? We have all adapted and learned what is the “prison culture” from recipes, coping, workouts, and religion. We have all learned new things and honed our skills.

There is a huge uptrend of people wanting to know and learn about the prison culture and how you would re-enter society. There is a booming market for content creators who are coming home from prison. With a wide variety of topics, creating content should be a breeze. Story-telling, advice, spiritual, health and fitness are all trendy topics that can attract views to your page. Getting started is simple. You need a smart phone, social media accounts and a story to tell. With a low start-up cost, becoming profitable should not be a problem.



Cover page through conclusion courtesy of:
Kelsie Chesnut, Ruth Delaney, Eurielle Kiki, and Niloufer Taber, *The Labor Market for People With Conviction Histories: An Examination of Access to Good Jobs* (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2025).



The Labor Market for People With Conviction Histories: An Examination of Access to Good Jobs

Kelsie Chesnut
Ruth Delaney
Eurielle Kiki
Niloufer Taber

Vera Institute of Justice

January 2025

Table of Contents

Introduction 3

Background 6

Study Overview 9

Findings 11

Navigating legal barriers to employment 11

National trends 12

Conclusion 18

Discussion 18

Recommendations for prison education programs, correctional education providers, and employers 19

Appendix A: Methodology 21

Appendix B: Jurisdiction-specific Summaries 31

Appendix C: Occupation Index 134

Endnotes 151

Acknowledgments 154

About Citations 154

Credits 154

Suggested Citation 155

Introduction

Postsecondary education is a critical pathway for economic mobility. Most jobs now require some level of postsecondary education. The percentage of jobs that require postsecondary education has been growing over the past 50 years, with higher levels of education increasingly being required to take advantage of well-paying work opportunities in growing industries and occupations.[1] Over the next six years, around 72 percent of all occupations in the United States are projected to require some form of postsecondary education.[2]

Simultaneously, many employers are facing serious challenges finding enough qualified workers to meet labor demands. Recent data shows there are 8.5 million job openings in the United States but only 6.5 million unemployed workers.[3] Further, the skills gap—the difference between the skills required for jobs in growing fields and the experience and training candidates have—is contributing to the worker shortage, and employers will need to rethink their approach to recruiting and retaining employees to address this issue.[4] With more than 750,000 people in prison in the United States who have completed high school, colleges and corrections agencies can build postsecondary programs to meet the skills gap and keep the economy competitive. As the largest federal grant program offered to undergraduates demonstrating financial need, Pell Grant reinstatement for students who are incarcerated, which took effect on July 1, 2023, offers the opportunity to scale up postsecondary education programs in prison to prepare people returning home for employment in good jobs in in-demand fields.[5]

The purpose of this national report is to help incarcerated students, corrections officials, colleges teaching in prison, and other reentry employment and education partners identify which economic sectors to target for skill development based on demand for labor, accessibility to people with conviction histories, and earnings potential. This report summarizes findings of a study on labor markets and regulatory barriers, and it can serve as a basis to

develop data-informed programming. This study examines how labor market trends and legal and regulatory barriers to employment for people with conviction histories interact in each state in order to identify good jobs that are accessible to people with conviction histories. This report defines "good jobs" as those that are in demand, pay a living wage for one adult and no children, and require some postsecondary education, in line with the good jobs principles developed by the U.S. Departments of Commerce and Labor. This framework—developed in 2022—was made up of eight principles for workers, businesses, labor unions, advocates, researchers, state and local governments, and federal agencies for a shared vision of job quality. Good jobs are the foundation of an equitable economy that lifts up workers and families, allows everyone to share in prosperity, and supports local communities and the overall U.S. economy. (See "Good jobs principles" on page 5.) Often, the types of college programs offered in prison have been based on what is allowed under prison rules or feasible for the college to deliver in that setting. With this study, the Vera Institute of Justice (Vera) takes the approach of starting at the end goal—a good job—and working backward from there to determine which good jobs are legally accessible in order to inform which college programs or credentials to offer.

This report defines "good jobs" as those that are in demand, pay a living wage for one adult and no children, and require some postsecondary education, in line with the good jobs principles developed by the U.S. Departments of Commerce and Labor.

The reinstatement of Pell Grants creates opportunities for colleges to offer new prison education programs and expand existing programs, providing increased access to education for incarcerated people. To that end, this report contains information designed for a number of different audiences. It provides

- transparent information to **students** deciding where to spend their Pell dollars and prepare for possible future occupations;
- guidance to **departments of corrections (DOCs) and postsecondary institutions designing prison education programs (PEPs)** on which credentials and programs to consider offering and the importance of offering academic and career advising to students; and

- education to **employers** about legal and regulatory barriers to consider when setting hiring practices.

This study offers information to stakeholders as they develop strategies to bridge the gap between career opportunities and economic mobility for people who are formerly incarcerated. At the same time, Vera recognizes that wages are just one way to measure the quality of employment. What a worker considers a good job will depend on their individual goals and perspectives. This report offers insight into just one piece of the larger picture.

This report first provides background on the current economic landscape as well as prior research on economic mobility generally and, more specifically, among formerly incarcerated people. Next, the report provides a brief study overview, including the research questions and methods of analysis. Third, the findings section discusses navigating the legal and regulatory barriers to employment in each jurisdiction, followed by national trends. The report concludes with a discussion of implications and recommendations for next steps.

GOOD JOBS PRINCIPLES AS DEFINED BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENTS OF COMMERCE AND LABOR

- Qualified applicants are actively recruited—especially those from underserved communities.
- Full-time and part-time workers are provided family-sustaining benefits that promote economic security and mobility.
- Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility are core values and practiced norms in the workplace.
- Empowerment and representation: Workers can form and join unions. Workers can engage in protected, concerted activity without fear of retaliation.

- Workers have a safe, healthy, and accessible workplace, as well as job security.
- Organizational culture: All workers belong, are valued, contribute meaningfully to the organization, and are engaged and respected, especially by leadership.
- All workers are paid a stable and predictable living wage that is transparent, equitable, and increases with skills and experience.
- Skills and career advancement: Workers have equitable opportunities and tools to progress to future good jobs within their organizations or outside them.

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce and U.S. Department of Labor, *Good Jobs Principles* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce and U.S. Department of Labor, 2022), https://perma.cc/ZXU8-ZTD7.

Background

On average, more than 1,000 people are released from state and federal prison every day, totaling 448,400 in 2022 alone.[6] Each will need to secure housing, employment, and other essentials. Increasing access to good jobs among people who are formerly incarcerated will speed successful reintegration into society, reducing crime, bolstering local economies, and increasing tax revenues.

Postsecondary education plays a crucial role in securing employment in today's labor landscape. This trend has persisted for decades and shows no signs of changing soon, as underscored by projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. These show an annual average of 4.7 million job openings over the next decade, most of which will be concentrated in the health care and social assistance fields; professional, scientific, and technical services; and the transportation

and warehousing sectors.[7] Entry-level education requirements within these openings will range from some college to a bachelor's degree.[8] Most jobs now require some level of postsecondary education, and by 2031, 72 percent of all jobs in the United States will require education and training beyond high school.[9] But just having the necessary level of education may not be enough. Approximately one-third of adults in the United States possess some form of a conviction history—including arrest records or charges without convictions—which often pose barriers to employment.[10] Addressing this issue is essential for companies to remain competitive and for the overall health of the U.S. economy to thrive.

Those with a history of incarceration see reduced wages and earnings. Studies reveal that past incarceration can lead to an 11 percent reduction in subsequent wages, a decrease of nine weeks in annual employment, and a staggering 40 percent decline in yearly earnings.[11] This effect is disproportionately felt by formerly incarcerated Black and Latino men, who experience earnings losses of 44 percent and 41 percent, respectively, equating to an estimated earnings reduction of nearly $179,000 by age 48.[12] Access to postsecondary education in prisons has the potential to substantially improve employment rates for people who are formerly incarcerated throughout the United States. On average, people returning home after completing a postsecondary education program while incarcerated can anticipate a nearly 10 percent increase in employment rates compared to those who do not complete a postsecondary education program.[13]

Approximately one-third of adults in the United States possess some form of a conviction history—including arrest records or charges without convictions—which often pose barriers to employment.

Low levels of educational attainment are common among incarcerated people, especially Black men.[14] The statistics are stark: the incarceration rate for young Black men with low levels of education increased by 22 points in the two decades following 1980.[15] By 2004, 34 percent of young Black male high school dropouts were incarcerated daily, a rate 40 times higher than the national average.[16] Additionally, imprisonment has become prevalent for Black male dropouts born since the mid-1960s, with 60 to 70

percent experiencing incarceration.[17] Despite this, the majority of people (58 percent) who are incarcerated do not complete an education program while in prison.[18] Among those who do earn a new educational credential, the majority completed a high school or GED program.[19] Only 9 percent of incarcerated people completed a postsecondary program while in prison in 2014.[20] However, low enrollment does not reflect low interest: in 2014, 70 percent of people in prison expressed a desire to enroll in an academic program.[21] The problem lies in access. Most existing programs are funded through the federal Second Chance Pell program, described in detail in this section, which most recently served a maximum of 20,299 incarcerated students over the 2022–2023 fiscal year.[22]

People who enroll in college in prison and who engage in careers after release have a lower likelihood of recidivating and a greater likelihood of earning living wages compared to their counterparts who did not.[23] Entering a career, rather than transitional or short-term employment, plays a role in this success.[24] However, finding stable employment post-release is one of the biggest challenges faced by people leaving prison.[25] Enrolling in postsecondary programs could increase employment rates among formerly incarcerated people across the United States by nearly 10 percent, according to one estimate.[26] An increase in employment rates translates into an increase in earnings for formerly incarcerated people and their families. One estimate placed the increase of the combined wages earned by all formerly incarcerated people at more than $45 million during the first year back in their communities.[27] At the same time, the impact of lowered rates of rearrest and/or reconviction could decrease state reincarceration spending by as much as $365 million per year.[28]

One promising opportunity to reverse this trend took effect on July 1, 2023: the reinstatement of federal Pell Grant eligibility to incarcerated people after nearly 30 years of exclusion. Pell Grants are need-based federal financial aid that can be used to pay for eligible postsecondary education.[29] Under the new law and regulations, postsecondary institutions must ensure the credentials they offer in prison are free of licensure barriers for people with convictions.[30] These measures aim to prevent student enrollment

in programs that would lead to jobs prohibited by state or federal law due to prior convictions.[21] However, the restrictions in place are complex and vary widely from state to state. For example, estimates indicate that more than 1,100 occupations face state regulations through licensure, certification, and registration, yet fewer than 60 occupations are regulated by more than half the states, raising concerns about quality and consistency across jurisdictions.[22] And although this offers a baseline of protection against inaccessible jobs and careers, a further step those planning Pell-eligible programs could take is to ensure the credential track leads to a "good job."

Study Overview

The study was guided by three research questions:

- Which occupations in each state are expected to grow in the future and pay a living wage upon entry?
- Which of these jobs typically requires some form of postsecondary education?
- Which of these good jobs are open to people with felony convictions?

To answer the first two questions, Vera drew on available data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics to identify the occupations that could be classified as good jobs. Vera considered occupations to be good jobs if they were projected to grow in each state and the District of Columbia through 2030, paid a living wage at the 10th percentile of the occupation's pay range as a proxy for entry-level wages, and required a postsecondary credential for entry or advancement.[23] Vera made the decision to require that good jobs pay a living wage upon entry—rather than to consider the median income—to account for the position of workers who are formerly incarcerated, who have historically been paid reduced wages compared to their counterparts for a variety of reasons, such as being willing to work

for less due to the pressures and challenges they face finding a job; having limited work histories prior to reentry; entering a new field opened to them by participation in education; or, once employed, being subject to stigma that hinders career advancement. However, this criterion resulted in the exclusion of many critical professions, such as educators and social workers, as these professions did not typically pay a living wage for one adult and no children upon entry. This is indicative of a broader labor issue outside of the scope of this study related to how the U.S. economy is structured and the prevalence of low wages overall. (See "Appendix A: Methodology" on page 21.) Vera's living wage analysis originally included two household structures: one adult and no children; and one adult and two children. Upon analysis, virtually no occupations met the living wage for one adult and two children upon entry. This has a potentially disparate impact on women, who are more likely than men to be sole caregivers to children both generally and upon release from incarceration.[34]

Regarding the requirement for postsecondary education, Vera included occupations that required a postsecondary nondegree award, an associate's degree, or a bachelor's degree. Postsecondary nondegree awards are obtained through programs that lead to a certificate or other award, but not a degree. Some examples of a postsecondary nondegree award include nursing assistants, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, and hairstylists.[35]

From this pool of eligible occupations in each state, Vera then identified the top occupations legally accessible to people with felony conviction histories.[36] Using data from the National Inventory of Collateral Consequences of Conviction, Vera cross-referenced those good jobs against any legal or regulatory barriers that limit or prevent entry to identify which are accessible to people with felony convictions.[37] (See "Appendix A: Methodology" on page 21.) Although legal restrictions may vary based on the severity of conviction, Vera's analysis is limited to any felony conviction. Findings are aggregated nationally and presented at the jurisdiction level in Appendix B on page 31. Applicable legal restrictions were applied at the time of analysis, but are subject to change.

Findings

NAVIGATING LEGAL BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Legal and regulatory restrictions on employment make it harder for people to obtain quality employment—good jobs—after release. Vera's analysis revealed this was complicated for two main reasons. First, while legal barriers to licensure for specific occupations, such as nursing, were fairly easy to identify, determining accessibility of more generalized occupations, like logistician, was more complicated. Verifying the accessibility of occupations requiring specific licensure to people with conviction histories was a clear process. As occupations required increasingly higher levels of education, Vera found that they became more flexible and could be performed across industries and fields. This resulted in less clarity in determining whether an occupation was subject to legal restrictions. Taking the previous example of logistician, no specific legal restrictions exist limiting the accessibility of that occupation to a person with a conviction history. However, legal accessibility may be determined by other factors associated with a specific position, such as the industry or location.

Second, barriers vary widely across jurisdictions and typically are not clear-cut. Restrictions can vary in terms of their degrees of certainty of implementation and their permanence. Legal and regulatory restrictions could be either mandatory or discretionary and imposed permanently or for a temporary period. Even when legal restrictions are discretionary, the process for navigating them can still be unclear and uncertain. Recently, some state policymakers looking to ease legal barriers to employment for people with conviction histories have enacted legislation shifting from mandatory to discretionary implementation.[33] Although these reforms are intended to increase access, such a shift may actually increase uncertainty as there is little information on how to navigate the discretionary implementation, what criteria decision-makers consider, or how these discretionary decisions might

disparately impact some groups over others. When everything is discretionary, implementation can be subjective. Intersectional factors such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status can exacerbate these challenges and make it even more challenging to navigate employment barriers.[19]

NATIONAL TRENDS

In this section, Vera presents aggregated findings of the most frequently occurring and excluded good jobs across 51 jurisdictions (all 50 states and the District of Columbia). Vera ranked all identified good jobs within each state based on anticipated growth and cross-referenced them against applicable legal and regulatory restrictions to determine accessibility. (See "Appendix A: Methodology" on page 21.) The good jobs that were legally accessible across the most jurisdictions are presented first, followed by those that most frequently had barriers. In each section, these findings are aggregated and categorized by the three Pell-eligible credential types: postsecondary nondegree award (e.g., nursing assistant credential, paramedic credential), associate's degree, and bachelor's degree. Within each of these categories, credentials can prepare students for entry into specific fields or cultivate transferrable skills through academic study. Certificates typically require fewer than 60 credit hours for completion, associate's degrees about 60 credit hours, and bachelor's degrees 120 credit hours.

Although exhaustive, this analysis is subject to limitations. These include the incomplete assessment of accessibility due to unknown occupational requirements and the challenge of determining discretionary processes for every legal restriction. Additionally, presenting labor market information by occupation rather than industry may obscure the legislation's applicability, which is often determined by industry. Furthermore, local and regional disparities in exclusion rates may exist, influenced by cultural attitudes, economic conditions, and local employment needs. Understanding these regional nuances is crucial to develop targeted strategies to address barriers to employment.

Most accessible good jobs (economically competitive occupations), by postsecondary education (PSE) credential

This section examines the most frequently occurring good jobs that are also legally accessible by PSE credential across the nation.

FIGURE 1

Summary of the most frequently identified good jobs across the nation (across 51 jurisdictions), by postsecondary nondegree award

Occupation title	Frequency
Computer numerically controlled tool programmers	72.5%
Surgical technologists	64.7%
Electrical and electronics repairers, commercial and industrial equipment	49.0%
Telecommunications equipment installers and repairers, except line installers	37.3%
Electrical and electronics repairers, powerhouse, substation, and relay	27.5%
Heating, air conditioning, and refrigeration mechanics and installers	27.5%
Tool and die makers	25.5%
Electrical and electronics installers and repairers, transportation equipment	21.6%
Wind turbine service technicians	21.6%
Audio and video technicians	11.8%

FIGURE 2

Summary of the most frequently identified good jobs across the nation (across 51 jurisdictions), associate's degree

Occupation title	Frequency
Diagnostic medical sonographers	86.3%
Paralegals and legal assistants	56.9%
Computer network support specialists	45.1%
Respiratory therapists	31.4%
Mechanical engineering technologists and technicians	29.4%
Environmental engineering technologists and technicians	21.6%
Magnetic resonance imaging technologists	19.6%
Radio, cellular, and tower equipment installers and repairers	19.6%
Chemical technicians	17.6%
Nuclear medicine technologists	17.6%

FIGURE 3

Summary of the most frequently identified good jobs across the nation (across 51 jurisdictions), bachelor's degree

Occupation title	Frequency
Medical and health services managers	86.3%
Information security analysts	76.5%
Logisticians	74.5%
Operations research analysts	74.5%
Market research analysts and marketing specialists	37.3%
Interpreters and translators	11.8%
Fundraisers	9.8%
Special effects artists and animators	9.8%
Agents and business managers of artists, performers, and athletes	7.8%
Computer and information systems managers	5.9%

- **Occupations are more specifically aligned with the requisite PSE credential at the postsecondary nondegree award and associate's levels as compared to the bachelor's level.** Both legal exclusions and credentials map more clearly onto these occupations, making navigation more straightforward.
- **Bachelor's degrees are valuable due, in part, to their flexibility, as they can lead to multiple occupations or career paths.** Occupations at the bachelor's level are more generalized and subject to less clear legal restrictions. Opportunities for the same good jobs as identified in this report are available across multiple industries, which will be more determinative of accessibility than legal restrictions.
- **Occupations in the medical field not requiring licensure were some of the most frequently occurring good jobs in this study.** For example, surgical technologists, diagnostic sonographers, and medical and health services managers all satisfied the good jobs criteria, are some of the most in-demand occupations across the nation, and were legally accessible in a majority of jurisdictions.

Most commonly excluded good jobs (economically competitive), by PSE credential

As part of the analysis to identify the top five legally accessible good jobs for each state, many economically competitive jobs were excluded. These roles met the wage and growth criteria and required some postsecondary education, but they are constrained by various combinations of mandatory, discretionary, permanent, and temporary legal restrictions for people with felony convictions. This section describes the most frequently excluded good jobs—those occupations that meet the good jobs criteria but are inaccessible to people with felony convictions. Notably, these do not represent all jobs from which people with conviction histories were excluded at the time of this study. (See "Appendix A: Methodology" on page 21.)

FIGURE 4

Summary of the most frequently excluded good jobs across the nation (across 51 jurisdictions), by postsecondary nondegree award

Occupation title	Frequency
Aircraft mechanics and service technicians	68.6%
First-line supervisors of firefighting and prevention workers	60.8%
Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses	58.8%
Heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers	39.2%
Captains, mates, and pilots of water vessels	31.4%
Fire inspectors and investigators	23.5%
Dental assistants	17.7%
Heating, air conditioning, and refrigeration mechanics and installers	15.7%
Firefighters	13.7%
Ship engineers	9.8%

FIGURE 5

Summary of the most frequently excluded good jobs across the nation (across 51 jurisdictions), associate's degree

Occupation title	Frequency
Physical therapist assistants	64.7%
Respiratory therapists	64.7%
Occupational therapy assistants	60.8%
Dental hygienists	47.1%
Aerospace engineering and operations technologists and technicians	27.5%
Avionics technicians	23.5%
Radiologic technologists and technicians	15.7%
Nuclear medicine technologists	13.7%
Radiation therapists	11.8%
Air traffic controllers	7.8%

FIGURE 6

Summary of the most frequently excluded good jobs across the nation (across 51 jurisdictions), bachelor's degree

Occupation title	Frequency
Actuaries	25.5%
Financial examiners	23.5%
Financial managers	23.5%
Industrial engineers	17.7%
Aerospace engineers	11.8%
Construction managers	7.8%
Interpreters and translators	7.8%
Agents and business managers of artists, performers, and athletes	5.9%
Materials engineers	5.9%
Petroleum engineers	5.9%

- **People with conviction histories are not currently able to fill major labor gaps.** Exclusionary practices are pervasive across a range of occupations, suggesting a systemic issue affecting people with criminal histories seeking employment in several fields. Labor shortages in various industries are exacerbated by restrictive hiring practices that limit the pool of eligible candidates, potentially impacting overall industry performance.

- **Several occupations are excluded based on licensure restrictions related to conviction histories.** Licensure restrictions across occupations tend to vary by state and type of conviction, making navigation even more challenging.

- **Inaccessible jobs often involve critical roles in health care, public safety, transportation, and skilled trades.** People with criminal histories consistently face challenges accessing licensed roles in these important sectors of the economy, irrespective of the level of education required. For example, positions like aircraft mechanics and service technicians, first-line supervisors of firefighting and prevention workers, physical therapist assistants, and respiratory therapists were inaccessible to people with felony convictions in at least two-thirds of jurisdictions (50 states and the District of Columbia). These findings reflect crucial sectors in which barriers to job entry persist.

- **In each state, federal exclusions deny access to a substantial number of occupations.** For example, aircraft mechanics and service technicians and actuaries and financial managers regularly met the living wage and growth criteria across jurisdictions, but they were always excluded due to federal regulations.

Conclusion

DISCUSSION

Findings from this study underscore the value of a bachelor's degree's flexibility, but also the ambiguous barriers people leaving prison with these credentials may have to navigate in seeking a job. This study shows that a bachelor's degree provides access to a larger number of good jobs across a range of industries. At the same time, the restrictions on occupations requiring postsecondary nondegree awards or associate's degrees are more straightforward. This has implications for people considering their career pathways and weighing the pros and cons of investing their time and resources in completing more advanced degrees. Although some state policymakers have sought to ease some of these barriers in recent years, strategies focusing on making mandatory barriers discretionary may have a limited impact and create additional complexity for employers and job seekers alike. With no oversight, these discretionary legal barriers can be biased and exacerbate existing disparities. "Clean Slate" legislation offers another approach. This type of policy seals conviction histories for people who meet certain criteria. Twelve states have passed bills of this type in recent years.[40]

If attuned to these issues, postsecondary institutions, departments of corrections, reentry support services, American Job Centers, and other resources can help people with conviction histories navigate the complexities of the job market. In addition to designing credential pathways to lead to good jobs, colleges offering postsecondary programs in prison will need to provide academic and career advising to students to connect studies to career preparation. For students to make informed decisions, they need clear, accurate information about the costs and benefits of enrolling in the different types of programs available to them.[41] Wages are only one aspect of the value of a postsecondary education. There are also other ways to assess and interpret the value of different credentials and courses of

study. Student interest, intellectual growth, and civic engagement are just a few of the other factors that shape student decision-making.[42] Strong academic and career advising that equips students to evaluate all of the potential benefits and costs of enrolling in a program will enable the student to determine which program best suits their academic and career goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRISON EDUCATION PROGRAMS, CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION PROVIDERS, AND EMPLOYERS

Based on the analysis presented and Vera's extensive experience providing technical assistance to prison education programs during the Second Chance Pell experiment, Vera has the following recommendations for prison education programs, correctional education providers, and employers.

- To meet growing labor needs across the United States, prison education programs and correctional education should offer coherent systems of higher education. Students should be able to access multiple pathways and have choices in pursuing good jobs and filling the labor and skills gaps.
- Prison education programs should develop a protocol to ensure they are not providing education that leads to licensure for an occupation from which the person is barred. Prison education program administrators will have to do some portion of this same analysis to meet this obligation, and this report can serve as a reference.
- Prison education programs should develop quality academic and career advising, as required by regulations, to support students in navigating their academic careers. This includes advising based on licensure barriers, labor market conditions, and students' individual priorities and goals.

- Prison education programs and correctional education should consider labor market needs and opportunities when determining which programs to offer to incarcerated students. By starting with good jobs and providing choices to students, prison education programs and correctional education can shift away from offering programs based on a feasibility mindset. To that end, training barriers, such as access to technology and external apprenticeship opportunities, may need to be addressed at the DOC level in order to consider how to successfully implement programs aimed at these careers.

- Colleges and corrections agencies should build a culture of coordination and cooperation as well as relationships with a host of labor market institutions, including workforce development boards, industry associations, and state departments of labor, to enhance the information on which they base their programming decisions and advising practices.

- Employers should proactively engage with colleges and corrections agencies to discuss their gaps and make a plan to create career pipelines that begin in prison and lead to a good job upon release.

ISSUE MEME

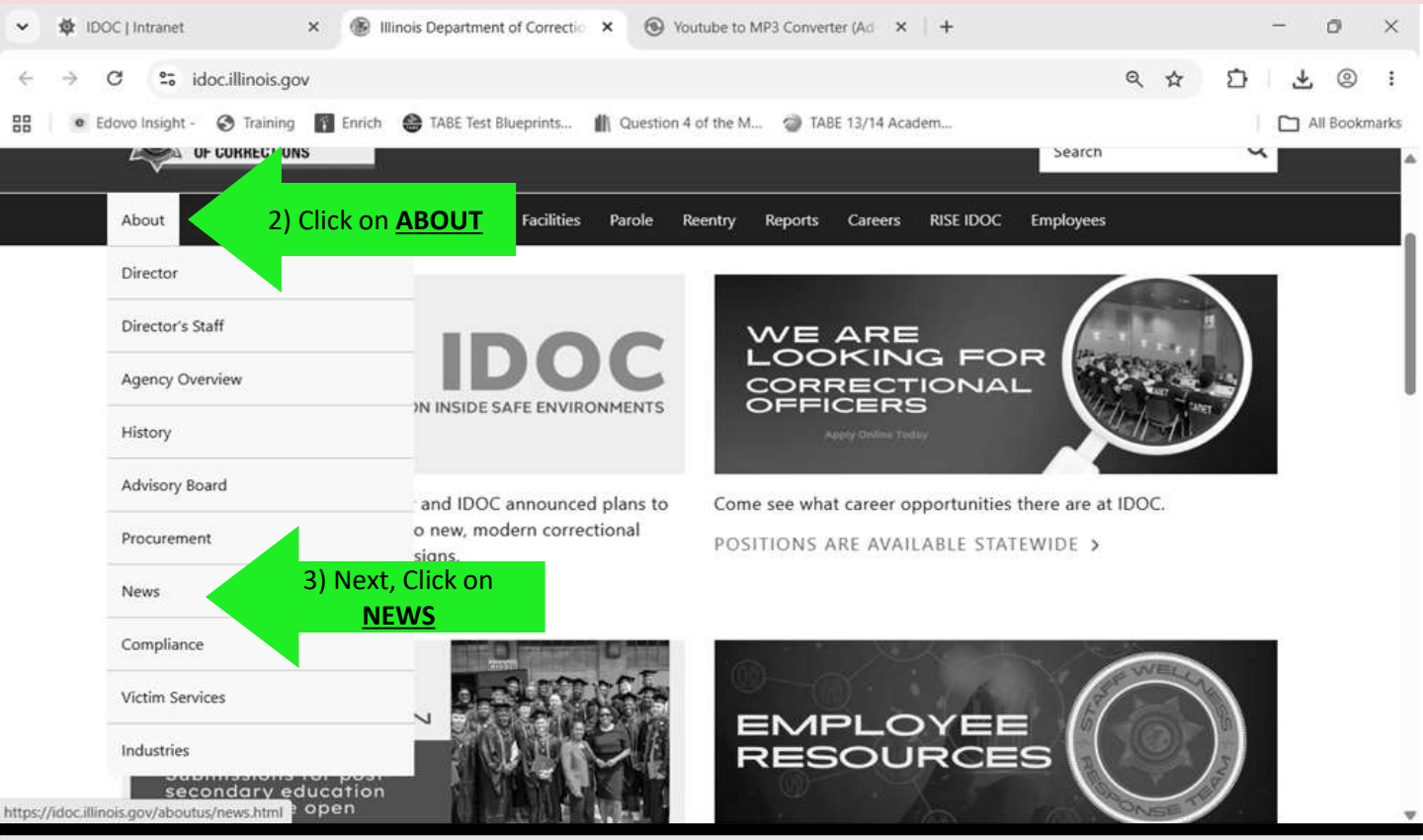


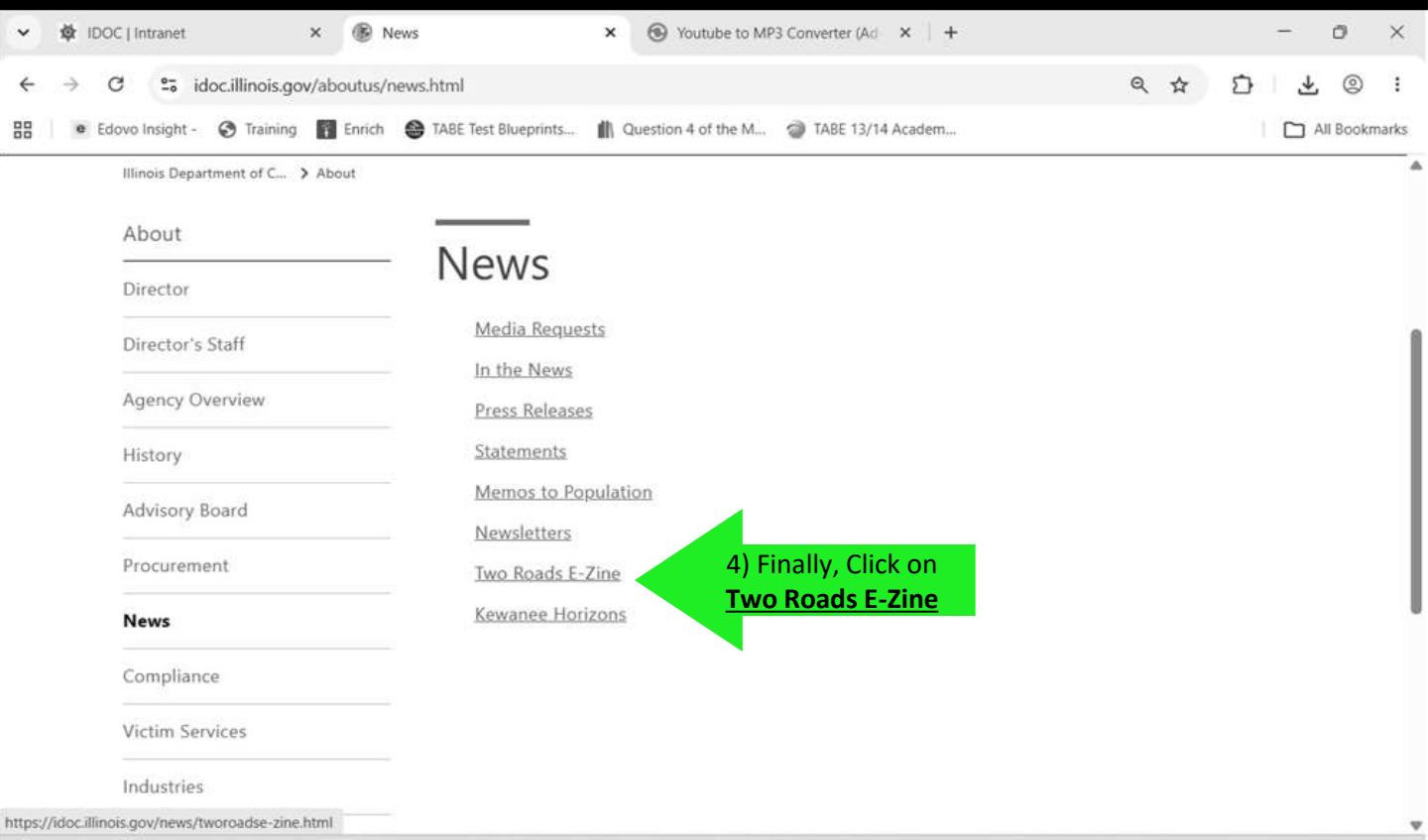
What Do You Mean You Can't Find A Job?
You Better Stop Playing With Me!

LET'S GET TO WORK

Take these steps to find Two Roads On-line

1) Go to idoc.illinois.gov, the page will look like this:





…..or simply type in this link: idoc.illinois.gov/news/tworoadse-zine.html


tR