

The employers who can't seem to fill the United States's roughly 6 million vacant jobs are at a loss for what to do. Qualified candidates are seemingly nowhere to be found. In Washington, D.C., for example, there aren't enough workers who have the healthcare-management or sales skills to meet the demands of the hospitals and retail stores and banks desperate to hire, according to a report by LinkedIn's Economic Graph Team. Philadelphia has so many job openings that can't be filled because its residents lack skills in areas including politics and retail.

Policymakers such as Education Secretary Betsy DeVos say the solution is to recognize the range of avenues by which someone can become "qualified" for a given job. Nontraditional forms of education, such as apprenticeships—in which students can participate in on-the-job training while earning subsidized salaries—are gaining support among Republicans and Democrats alike. "We need to stop forcing kids into believing a traditional four-year degree is the only pathway to success," Devos said in November at the inaugural meeting of the White House Task Force on Apprenticeship Expansion...

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