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Jobs Now! Providence created to stimulate local workforce

March 10, 2010 - Rhode Island

There could be no more urgent an issue today than our economy. Rebuilding its foundation requires the very best of all of us, and a commitment to do all that we can to keep America strong. For our nation's economic and military strength, rebuilding begins within our cities and towns.

Municipalities are the first place to hear the alarm sound, whether it's homeland security or the weakening of our economy. Businesses shuttering doors, growing joblessness, rising crime, more foreclosures - these were all the indicators of an economy in trouble. Today - with our still new but well-tested President, we are beginning the hard work of turning around this situation.

Our small businesses - which shoulder fully 95% of the economy - need a hand. Late last month, with the cooperation of the state department of Health and Human Services TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Emergency Contingency Fund) created under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Providence took an important step towards creating jobs and expanding business. I announced JOBS NOW! PROVIDENCE, as a tool to put out-of-work residents back in the workforce, and provide a 100% wage reimbursement to businesses hiring these new, eligible workers.

Through JOBS NOW! PROVIDENCE, companies complete a simple application to the Providence Economic Development Partnership, then either place a job order for workers through Workforce Solutions of Providence/Cranston (who will carefully pre-screen and match eligible job seekers) or send their suggested applicants to Workforce Solutions for verification of eligibility.

New hires must be city of Providence residents, have at least one child under 18 years (even if they do not live with that child(ren)), a household income at or below 225% of the federal poverty level, and be able to show proof of the right to work.

Employers must pay their new workers at least \$7.40 an hour (Rhode Island's minimum wage,) or the same rate as other workers doing the same job duties (at or above \$7.40/hour.) Employers must also document and cover the cost of payroll taxes, fringe benefits and employee supervision. And while the wage subsidy expires on September 30, 2010, employers who retain these new employees past that date may qualify for a Work Opportunity Tax Credit.

Employers interested in this program should be Providence-based, and are invited to call NetworkRI at 401.462.8908, for more information. ALSO, on Saturday, March 13 from 9 am - 4 pm, I will be hosting the Mayor's Jobs & Small Business Resource Day, to provide important and timely information to businesses and workers alike. The event is free and open to the public and vendors, and you are invited to join us. Call at 401.351.4300 x 627, to reserve space or for more information.

David Cicilline is the mayor of Providence.

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