



The Daily Dish

The Quick and Untimely Death of IRAPs

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Eakinomics: The Quick and Untimely Death of IRAPs

{Spoiler Alert: The recipe for this Eakinomics is one part rant for each part policy fact. For a more measured version of the same offering, see Isabel Soto's [fine discussion](#).}

Remember, before the pandemic, when it was broadly agreed that there needed to be an alternative to formal education as a pathway to skills for workers? (Remember before the pandemic at all?) Remember how apprenticeships were regularly touted as an integral component of such a pathway?

Remember how the traditional U.S. apprenticeship, the Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) had acquired a bad rap (couldn't resist) because, in the words of Soto, they "remain concentrated in a handful of [industries](#)[?] Construction, public administration, manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, and utilities make up [90 percent](#) of active federal apprenticeships. [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) data, however, show that six out of the 10 most rapidly growing occupations are in the health care sector, and [American Action Forum research](#) shows that the service sector will be responsible for the majority of occupational growth through 2024. Among [RAPs](#), those categories represent 2.5 percent and 1 percent of apprenticeships, respectively." Remember that?

Remember when the Trump Administration announced its Industry-Recognized Apprenticeship Programs (IRAPs)? I remember thinking it wasn't quite as exciting as the quarterly release of productivity data, but that somehow it did make sense to have an apprenticeship program aimed at the skills employers actually wanted, in the growing sectors where apprentices and workers would be needed, and accessible to the 47 percent of the labor force that is [female](#). Logical.

So, dial your thoughts to the present, when the U.S. labor force is confronted with overcoming a massive decline in employment in leisure and hospitality, education and health, and retail trade due to COVID-19. Wouldn't it be great to be able to nimbly construct apprenticeships to get those workers the skills for new jobs? IRAPs are exactly that: "The first IRAP was created in October 2020. Since then, over [130 IRAPs](#)...were created, with the majority focused on nursing credentials—helping to alleviate a substantial shortage of nurses."

Well, evidently the Biden Administration awoke from such a reverie and concluded: "No. We want a top-down apprenticeship approach run by the Department of Labor bureaucracy and divorced from the needs of employers, the characteristics of the economy, and the inequities in the labor force."

President Biden ended IRAPs in February, rolling back the executive order that led to their creation.