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THE NATIONAL OPPORTUNITY SUMMIT FOCUSES ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

February 2015 Event Brings Together Opportunity Nation, Business Roundtable, US Chamber of Commerce Foundation, Jobs for America's Graduates, and United Way Worldwide

WASHINGTON, D.C. – In a first of its kind event, a diverse group of businesses, nonprofits, and other organizations will address urgent issues of youth employment, skills training, meaningful education and career pathways at both the state and federal levels.

[The National Opportunity Summit](#), hosted by [Opportunity Nation](#) and co-conveners [Business Roundtable \(BRT\)](#), [U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation](#), [Jobs for America's Graduates \(JAG\)](#), and [United Way Worldwide](#), will welcome more than 1,000 leaders from the business, nonprofit, education, and government sectors. The groups will join young adults from across the country to find solutions for persistently high unemployment rates for Americans ages 16-24.

Today, this group of Americans is experiencing unemployment rates that are at least twice the national average, and an estimated 6 million are neither in school nor working. At the same time, many U.S. employers say that the inability to find qualified workers is their biggest obstacle to growth. Amid the current unemployment crisis, the economy demands a workforce equipped with the degrees, certificates and skills required to maintain competitiveness and support thriving communities.

Past Opportunity Summits have featured a range of speakers representing diverse viewpoints and sectors, including Dr. Fareed Zakaria, Angela Glover Blackwell, Serena Williams, Governor Deval Patrick, Senator Marco Rubio, Senator Michael Bennet, Arianna Huffington, and Pastor Rick Warren.

The event will take place on February 26, 2015 at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C. The Summit is made possible with support from [State Farm](#), [Bank of America](#), [Apollo Education Group](#), [Rockefeller Foundation](#), [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#), and others to be announced.

“Ensuring young people get workforce experience is critical to our nation’s ability to close the skills gap. There are many great examples of business engagement with this group but they are simply too few and far between,” said [U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation President John R. McKernan Jr.](#) “We need to identify the key elements of successful programs—both for the young person and the employer—and bring those to scale.”

“We are pleased this summit is focusing on an issue that’s critical to U.S. prosperity and economic growth,” said [Business Roundtable President John Engler](#). “Too often, young adults and the skills they will need get overlooked, but we know they must be the ones to make the next great invention or discovery. It is imperative that we work now to prepare them if our country is to enjoy future success.”

“The youth employment issue is still a long way from the national priority it should be, which is why this National Summit co-hosted by leading national private sector and nonprofit organizations is so

important,” said [Governor of Delaware and Chair of JAG National Board, Jack Markell](#). “We believe a convening of this scale and prestige will help to turn attention to what is truly a clear and present danger to both the American economy and society – the employability of our future workforce.”

“We all play a part in creating paths of opportunity for young adults,” said [Stacey D. Stewart, U.S. President, United Way Worldwide](#). “Working together with local partners, United Ways around the country are creating common-sense solutions that help our youth to meet the demands of today’s job market – an aspiration that no organization, individual or government can achieve on its own.”

“We all have a role to play in preparing the next generation for future success in the workplace, and helping put them on a path to financial stability,” said [Andrew Plepler, Bank of America Global Corporate Social Responsibility executive](#). “This can have a dramatic effect on individuals, families and the economy.”

“There are 5.8 million youth ages 16-24 who are disconnected from school and work and millions more who lack meaningful pathways to education and career. If we can connect them to the jobs of today and tomorrow, our communities – and our country – will prosper,” says [Mark Edwards, Founder and Co-Chair of Opportunity Nation](#). “The National Opportunity Summit is an important first step in uniting our nation around youth employment and it is exciting to see such a broad array of national leaders coalescing around this critically important issue,” said [Jonathan Lavine, Co-Chair of Opportunity Nation and Managing Director of Bain Capital and Sankaty Advisors](#).

"Our nation's economic prosperity depends on how well we engage, educate, and employ our younger citizens. This summit brings together multiple sectors to focus on ensuring youth have a clear and successful pathway to employment," says [Michael Tipsord, Vice Chairman and COO State Farm](#).

About Opportunity Nation:

Opportunity Nation is a bipartisan, national coalition of more than 300 businesses, nonprofits, educational institutions and community leaders working to expand economic opportunity. Opportunity Nation seeks to close the opportunity gap by amplifying the work of its coalition members, advocating policy and private sector actions, and releasing the annual Opportunity Index, a composite measure at the state and county levels of economic, educational and civic factors that foster opportunity.

About U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation is a nonprofit affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce dedicated to strengthening America’s long-term competitiveness by addressing developments that affect our nation, our economy, and the global business environment.

About Business Roundtable:

Business Roundtable (BRT) is an association of chief executive officers of leading U.S. companies working to promote sound public policy and a thriving U.S. economy. Business Roundtable's CEO members lead U.S. companies with \$7.4 trillion in annual revenues and more than 16 million employees.

About Jobs for America’s Graduates:

The organizing principle of Jobs for America's Graduates is JOBS with career advancement opportunities for the most challenged of America’s young people of great promise. JAG has assisted over one million young people to gain the knowledge and skills required for graduation, to be college and career ready and to pursue employment and/or enrollment in higher education.

About United Way Worldwide:

United Way improves lives by mobilizing the caring power of communities around the world to advance the common good. It consists of interdependent capabilities distributed at the global, regional, national and local levels, strengthened by centers of excellence.

For more information, please

visit: www.opportunitynation.org, www.unitedway.org, www.businessroundtable.org, www.uschamberfoundation.org, www.jag.org

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