

# \$4.6M grant aids displaced workers

**The Paducah Sun**

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A U.S. Department of Labor grant of nearly \$4.6 million will help displaced workers and their families in west Kentucky, including those affected by the end of uranium enrichment at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant.

The grant was awarded to the West Kentucky Workforce Investment Board to help workers laid off from the Paducah plant as well as from GE Aviation in Madisonville, according to the DOL. The funds will provide job training, career counseling, resume writing and job search assistance.

"The grant will enhance our services to individuals and positively impact the economy by enhancing and showcasing the skills of this competitive workforce," said Sheila Clark, director of the workforce investment board.

West Kentucky Community & Technical College will assist in providing the training, according to Barbara Veazey, president.

"We need skilled workers in western Kentucky and this is the opportunity we have been waiting for with training dollars," said Veazey.

"With this grant, workers and families in our community will be able to earn a certificate or a degree to make a better living for themselves or their families if they make the choice to step out and take advantage of this funding and go to college.

"We have the people to guide them in the process and get them started, so this is an important announcement."

In addition to expanding offerings to former employees at the PGDP, the grant will also provide training for their spouses.

"Workforce development is the No. 1 issue in economic development," said Scott Darnell, president/CEO of Paducah Economic Development. "This grant will allow us to continue our path forward giving our citizens the opportunity for employment in growth sector industries in our community."

According to Clark, regional partnerships, collaborative agencies, and the continuing efforts of Sens. Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul, as well as U.S. Rep. Ed Whitfield, made the grant possible.

McConnell encouraged the labor agency to approve the federal grant on behalf of the PGDP in a letter to Labor Secretary Thomas Perez.

"I am proud to continue to support PGDP workers, even after the ceasing of enrichment. I am hopeful the employment services will help these Kentuckians develop marketable skills for new opportunities in the workforce - including cleanup operations at the facility - and to help contribute to western Kentucky's economy," McConnell said.

According to Whitfield, chairman of the House Subcommittee on Energy and Power, the grant will assist 875 workers affected by the closing of the Paducah facility, and 80 workers affected by the GE Aviation layoffs.

"Providing job retraining for these individuals is an important step for employment growth and economic development in the First District," said Whitfield.

Of the \$4,598,681 grant announced Friday, \$2,170,658 will be released initially. Additional funding up to the amount approved will be made available as the WKWIB demonstrates a continued need for assistance.

The grant is performed in collaboration with the Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet.

Displaced workers from the PGDP can access information on services through the Career Solutions Community, [www.careersolutionscommunity.org](http://www.careersolutionscommunity.org). The phone number is 270-534-3914.