

# **Durbin, Duckworth, Shimkus to Labor Department: Golconda Job Corps closure should be temporary**

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and U.S. Representative John Shimkus (R-IL-15) today urged the Department of Labor (DOL) to work with the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service to reopen the Golconda Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center in a safe and timely manner.

“Job Corps programs are responsible for providing disconnected young people with a safe environment to develop vocational skills and further their education. Centers should be held accountable when the safety and well-being of staff, students, and communities are at risk. At the same time, we should not abandon communities and youth by closing low-performing centers without making a concerted effort to re-open these centers in a way that guarantees safety and a productive learning environment,” the members wrote in a letter to Lenita Jacobs-Simmons, National Director of the Office of Job Corps. “The decision to suspend operations at the Golconda Job Corps Center has serious consequences for the surrounding region and disconnected youth the Center serves. We hope that DOL and the Forest Service will do everything possible to make sure this closure is temporary.”

DOL recently announced its decision to temporarily close the Golconda Job Corps Center and suspend operations by August 19, 2017. In their letter, the members pressed DOL for the criteria that must be met in order to re-open the center, as well as details on how DOL will guarantee a smooth transition for youth currently enrolled at the center.

**Full text of their letter is available [here](#) and below:**

**August 3, 2017**

**The Honorable Lenita Jacobs-Simmons**

**National Director**

**Office of Job Corps**

**200 Constitution Avenue, NW**

**Washington, D.C. 20210**

**Dear Director Jacobs-Simmons:**

We are writing to urge the Department of Labor (DOL) to work together with the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service to reopen the Golconda Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center in as safe and timely a manner as possible.

DOL recently announced its decision to temporarily close the Golconda Job Corps Center and suspend operations by August 19, 2017. This Center has provided important educational and vocational services for hundreds of unemployed and out-of-school youth since 1965. The Golconda Center is the only Job Corps Center in Southern Illinois. It has been an economic engine for the region, providing employment

opportunities for hundreds of our constituents and partnering with a local hospital. As a pillar of the community, the closure of this center will be felt throughout the entire region.

We agree that the safety of students and staff at every Job Corps Center is the highest priority. Job Corps programs are responsible for providing disconnected young people with a safe environment to develop vocational skills and further their education. Centers should be held accountable when the safety and well-being of staff, students, and communities are at risk. At the same time, we should not abandon communities and youth by closing low-performing centers without making a concerted effort to re-open these centers in a way that guarantees safety and a productive learning environment.

The decision to suspend operations at the Golconda Job Corps Center has serious consequences for the surrounding region and disconnected youth the Center serves. We hope that DOL and the Forest Service will do everything possible to make sure this closure is temporary. With this in mind, we request a response to the following questions:

Has DOL clearly outlined the criteria that must be met in order to re-open the center?

Will DOL establish an appropriate timeline and channel of communication with the Forest Service to make sure the necessary benchmarks are met?

What time period and data will be used by DOL to assess whether the center can be reopened in a way that guarantees the health and safety of students and staff?

Will DOL use the authority granted under the Interagency Agreement or the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act to determine the process and conditions for reopening the Golconda center?

Does DOL plan to provide the Forest Service with technical assistance to develop operating procedures that demonstrate staff and students will be in a safe and productive environment?

How will DOL guarantee a smooth transition for youth currently enrolled at the center?

We thank you for your timely consideration of this important request.