

# 700 jobs for local youths in jeopardy

Summer program  
needs to be funded

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A summer jobs program for 700 local youths may be canceled if the state Legislature doesn't pass a funding bill in the next 10 days.

John Beauregard, executive director of the Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board, joined a call reiterated by Gov. M. Jodi Rell Wednesday for the General Assembly to appropriate \$11 million in federal stimulus funds needed for a summer program that serves up to 5,000 disadvantaged youths statewide.

"The longer we have to wait, the more the program is weakened," said Beauregard, whose Franklin-based board is one of five in Connecticut and oversees \$1.2 million covering 700 summer jobs for people ages 14 to 24.

Estimating based on the six-week program's traditional starting date of July 6, Beauregard said, "Something really needs to happen in the next seven to 10 days."

Funding needs to be in place by Wednesday, Rell said in a press release. Citing three letters written since May 21 to leading lawmakers, including Senate President Donald Williams, D-Brooklyn, the Republican governor said the state faces the prospects of losing vendors who would have to lay off staff.

"It is essential lawmakers act promptly, because thousands of youngsters — many of them disadvantaged and in our largest cities — are counting on these jobs," Rell said. "Many have already been assigned to work sites."

## SUMMER JOBS

FROM A1

Democrats plan to reconvene June 19 and 20 with the intention of passing a funding measure, said Derek Slap, communications director for the Senate Democrats.

"We'll get this done," he said. "The work force boards and the vendors should know that we're committed to the program."

Rell's sense of urgency was seconded by Paul Colen, executive director of EastConn, lead contractor working under Beauregard's board. Among

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EastConn's subcontractors helping youths find jobs are Norwich city government's Department of Human Services and the Thames Valley Council for Community Action.

"We've been working hard in recruiting kids," Colen said. "But it may all end up being for naught. It's too bad."

### 9,000 applications

Work force boards have taken more than 9,000 applications to fill up to 5,000 slots, Rell said. The governor pointed to the continuing recession as another reason for action.

"I am sure you realize in this economy, this program may be the only opportunity for

economically disadvantaged youth to be employed this summer," Rell wrote in her latest letter, dated June 9, to Williams and House Speaker Chris Donovan, D-Meriden.

Slap confirmed Williams received the letter.

Legislative efforts were made, Beauregard noted, with an amendment to a bill pending on the last day of the session that ended at midnight June 3. A special session, aimed chiefly at passing a state budget, began right after, but no action has been taken on the jobs funding, provided for in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act signed by President Barack Obama in February.