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U.S. Secretary of Labor Visited Tulare County to Hear from Local Employers and Workforce Leaders

Federal visit highlighted Tulare County's economic opportunities, industry partnerships, and innovative approaches to workforce development.

VISALIA, CA — U.S. Secretary of Labor Keith Sonderling visited Tulare County Tuesday, as part of a multi-stop tour across California to gain a better understanding of regional economic conditions, employer workforce needs, and the strategies local communities are using to prepare workers for in-demand careers.

Hosted by the Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County (WIB), the visit brought together federal leadership, local employers, workforce development professionals, and WIB Board members to discuss the opportunities and challenges shaping Tulare County's workforce.

During the visit, Secretary Sonderling and his team toured two of the region's major dairy processing facilities: Saputo in Tulare and California Dairies, Inc. in Visalia. The tours offered a firsthand look at local operations and the skills employers need to remain competitive and support continued growth.

The visit also included a roundtable discussion with WIB leadership, Board members, and business leaders from the Tulare-Kings Agriculture, Industrial, and Healthcare industry partnerships. These employer-led collaborations help identify common workforce challenges and shape training strategies that prepare residents for careers in the region's key industries.

The roundtable focused on how changing industry demands are influencing jobs and required skills, where employers face the greatest challenges in developing a skilled workforce, and how education and workforce partners can better respond. Participants were also invited to share examples of effective local collaborations and identify actions the U.S. Department of Labor could take to help businesses meet their workforce needs and support workers' career advancement. The discussion also included a statewide perspective on opportunities for more coordinated and flexible workforce services.

For the Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County, the visit was an opportunity to showcase the region's collaborative approach to workforce development, and the role local employers play in shaping solutions.

"We are incredibly honored to welcome Secretary Sonderling and his team to Tulare County and to share the important work happening across our workforce development system," said Jennie Bautista, Executive Director, Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County. "What makes our sector partnership approach special is the collaboration behind it. Our businesses help identify the skills and talent they need, and our workforce, education, and economic development partners listen and respond. We are proud of the relationships we've built and how they're helping create meaningful opportunities for job seekers while strengthening our local industries."

As one of the stops on the Secretary's tour, Tulare County had an opportunity to bring its unique economic and workforce priorities to a broader conversation about industry competitiveness and economic growth.

The visit underscored the value of connecting federal leadership with employers and workforce professionals who work every day to expand career opportunities and support the region's economic future.

About the Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County:

The Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County believes that too many people are unemployed or in low-wage jobs that don't sustain their families, while too many businesses have quality jobs that go unfilled. The WIB serves as Tulare County's workforce leader, bringing together employers, educators, government, and community organizations to advance the region's economic vitality. Through strategic investments, industry partnerships, and workforce innovation, the WIB helps residents advance their skills and connect to quality jobs while helping businesses develop the talent they need to grow.

The Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County, an equal opportunity employer/program, funds this project. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.