The beginning of fall once again marks the start of another school year filled with endless possibilities for wide-eyed students eager to learn. For AFPM, the beginning of the school year is yet another opportunity to continue to highlight the importance of career and technical education (CTE). Currently, America's refining and petrochemical community employs and supports over three million people, hiring individuals from all education levels to fill a wide range of positions (such as welders, electricians, chemists, and engineers). The industry is experiencing a strong need for new, technically-skilled employees as a result of the increasing domestic production of shale oil and natural gas, and this demand for skilled workers will only grow in the coming decade as a generation of workers retire. Fostering CTE will not only help ensure that our nation's students are equipped with the skills needed to enter the workforce, but will specifically support career growth in the refining and petrochemical sectors. AFPM continues to enhance its workforce development activities which are focused on providing guidance about the range of opportunities within the refining and petrochemical sectors, supporting the ongoing development of a highly skilled workforce, and partnering with existing workforce development efforts and organizations. AFPM's initiatives include:

- AFPM's workforce development website (which is also in Spanish).
- Leads communications and educational opportunities at the Federal and State level.
- Partners with several veterans-based organizations including American Jobs for America's Heroes and Hiring our Heroes.
- Engages in innovative industry-education programs through EdVenture Partners. This initiative focuses on two- and four-year schools where students develop and implement a community based marketing campaign to promote the range of career opportunities within the fuel and petrochemical manufacturing industries.

Notably, AFPM is supportive of the *Strengthening Careers and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act* (H.R. 5587), which passed the House by a vote of 405 – 5 on September 13, 2016. The Act reauthorizes and improves the *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006*. To align career education with in-demand jobs, the Act facilitates deeper collaboration between educational institutions, business, and industry. Importantly, H.R. 5587 incentivizes programs to promote the recognition of postsecondary credentials - including industry-recognized certifications. The legislation also helps CTE programs meet the needs of states, regions, and local labor markets. While it is unclear whether the path for Perkins reauthorization will move forward in the Senate this year due the short legislative calendar, one thing is clear - AFPM will continue to keep the importance of strengthening CTE at the forefront.

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