

Menendez would add \$1B for job training

Sen. Bob Menendez said Monday that he wants to make a push for more than \$1 billion in additional job training funds.

DON SMITH/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Sen. Bob Menendez speaking Monday in a machine shop at Bergen Community College in Paramus, where he outlined his proposal to beef up job training at community colleges and businesses across the country. With him were Tammy Molinelli of the Bergen County Workforce Investment Board; Constantine Papademas, a machine shop instructor, and former student Oscar de los Reyes.



The senator's plan, detailed at Bergen Community College in [Paramus](#), echoes efforts by President Obama this campaign season to beef up workforce development programs at community colleges across the country.

Obama included \$8 billion for the initiatives in his 2013 budget. However, funding for those programs is unlikely during this Congress, experts say.

Menendez, who also is up for reelection, said his plan would "dovetail" with the president's initiative. But others said the plan was a political move that unfairly shifted the burden of job training from the private sector to taxpayers.

Menendez said he will soon introduce a bill to create a \$1 billion competitive pool of funds for job training, such as that offered at Bergen and other community colleges. Additionally, his bill would offer businesses that do their own job training a \$3,000 tax credit per employee.

"We need to focus on skill sets that match with private sector need," said Menendez, D-N.J. "We need to incentivize in-house training and provide competitive opportunities in training people for real jobs."

Menendez's GOP opponent, state Sen. Joe Kyrillos, R-Monmouth, said Menendez was late to the game in worrying about jobs, noting that unemployment had risen during his 17 years in office.

Menendez made his announcement in a machine shop used for vocational training at the college. Also present were representatives from Crestron Electronics in [Rockleigh](#), which has used programs at Bergen to train technicians for the firm.

Oscar de los Reyes, 39, of [Palisades Park](#) was out of work for nearly two years before he came to BCC for the 225 hours of training that led to a full-time job at Crestron in 2010.

"Just under two years of unemployment does affect you emotionally and financially," said de los Reyes, wearing safety glasses and a lab coat. "This was a demanding program, but it gave me the skills and knowledge I needed. I have a career now again."