



With Summer Jobs Scarce, Council Seeks Federal Help

By [BENJAMIN SARLIN](#), Special to the Sun
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As the school year comes to a close, City Council members are asking Congress for help with the increasingly difficult task of finding summer jobs for area teenagers. This week, the council will debate a resolution calling on the federal government to pass legislation that would award \$1 billion in grants for summer job programs around the country.

New York is considered one of the most difficult places in [America](#) to find work as a teenager. A report by the [Center for Labor Market Studies](#) at [Northeastern University](#) found that only about a third of New York teens worked last summer, a lower percentage than every state except [California](#) and [Mississippi](#), and a far cry from [South Dakota](#), where the more than 70% of teenagers held summer jobs. The city's teenage unemployment rate rose to 28% in 2006 from 19% in 2000, even as the overall unemployment rate declined during the same period, according to a report by the [Community Service Society](#), an advocacy group.

In addition, the Summer Youth Employment Program, which places [New York City](#) residents between ages 14 and 21 in minimum wage jobs, mostly with city government and nonprofit organizations, faces \$3.2 million in cuts this year. Last year, 93,750 people applied for work through the program, and 41,804 of them were given a job for the summer.

On Wednesday, the City Council is debating a resolution that would endorse the Summer Jobs Stimulus Act of 2008, a bill to provide \$1 billion during the summer to local programs that hire teenagers. It was introduced by Senator Murray, a Democrat of Washington, who argues that summer jobs will boost the economy by increasing young Americans' spending money and at the same time reduce juvenile crime.

[Council Member Lewis Fidler](#) of [Brooklyn](#), a sponsor of the resolution, said the federal money could help offset the cuts to the city's employment program. The problem could be especially pronounced this summer, he said, as the nation's economic troubles might prompt businesses to hold off on hiring seasonal labor.

"The first thing to go when business is tight is the money for that extra kid for the summer," Mr. Fidler said yesterday in an interview. "We haven't seen those effects yet because we haven't come through the first summer of this economic downturn, but it doesn't take a brain surgeon to figure it out."

He added that the money the participants spend helps boost the economy. "The local merchants will be missing it as well," he said. "Kids get these checks and spend the money in the community almost immediately."