**Eastern Seaboard Apprenticeship Conference**

ESAC is the oldest continuous running apprenticeship conference in the nation. The first one was held in Bethel, Maine in 1945. This conference rotates among 13 east coast states and the District of Columbia. Its purpose is to bring together private and public sponsors of apprenticeship programs to address regional and national issues that impact the quality and operation of their programs and the apprenticeship system in general. Workshops, seminars, and vendor presentations provide state-of-the-art professional development to representatives from the states which constitute the Eastern Seaboard Apprenticeship Conference. Member states include Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont, Virginia and West Virginia.

Connecticut pioneered the development of apprenticeship programs. William Fitzgerald a Congressman from Connecticut’s 2nd Congressional District preached his doctrine, "Industry needs to train youth." As a champion for human rights and the sponsor of the 1937 National Apprenticeship Act, Fitzgerald had far sighted vision and insisted the country needed a large reservoir of skilled and trained manpower. His persistence and efforts as a United States Congressman resulted in the bill for federal apprenticeship training that has paved the way for the present federal-state partnership in on-the-job training and vocational training throughout the nation. Fitzgerald was appointed to the Labor Committee in November 1936. He served until 1938 and during this time sponsored the National Apprenticeship Act, often known as The Fitzgerald Act, which was signed by President Roosevelt on August 16, 1937.

The Fitzgerald Act pioneered national standards for apprentice training. As a result, thousands of previously unemployed youths were trained for the national defense during World War II. State apprenticeship agencies worked with the U.S. Department of Labor to encourage the growth of apprenticeship training.

Maine is pleased to host the 75th annual ESAC conference. We look forward to sharing our states long history in apprenticeship. Our local committee of state and union representatives are busy planning for a successful conference. For the most updated information, click on the ESAC [link](http://esaconference.org/). Please feel free to contact us with any questions.