



Why Congress Can't Move Fast Enough: The Case for a Citizen-Controlled Executive Order on AI and Jobs

Awakening Series – Paper #1

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Front Graphic Caption:

When over 30% of workers may have half their tasks disrupted by AI, policy lag becomes a national security crisis.

LinkedIn Caption

We are in the midst of an awakening—AI is reshaping work faster than policy can respond. A citizen-controlled Workforce Protection Authority, launched by Executive Order, is the fastest practical way to enforce fair automation, protect jobs, and safeguard national security.

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1. Preamble / Alarm Statement

We are in the midst of an awakening—AI and automation are replacing jobs faster than any law, regulation, or institution has prepared for. Major analyses suggest that over 30% of U.S. workers could see half of their tasks disrupted by generative AI; nearly 85% may see at least some portion of their work impacted. Occupations with higher AI exposure have already experienced steeper unemployment shifts in recent years. Universal Basic Income (UBI) is often proposed, but it lacks enforceability, leaves power concentrated, and does not provide agency to the displaced. The stakes are existential: without citizen control over automated power, democratic norms erode, inequality deepens, and national security is compromised. We propose a Citizen Workforce Protection Agency (WPA) via Executive Order—real authority, real oversight, real speed.

2. The Problem: Disruption Too Fast, Policy Too Slow

- AI adoption is accelerating across sectors, compressing technological change from decades into months. Disruption is uneven: entry-level, clerical, and routine cognitive tasks are often hit first, but white-collar and middle-income roles are increasingly exposed. Policy and budget cycles move far slower—leaving communities vulnerable.

[Insert Automation Potential by Industry Bar Chart]

Caption: Office & administrative support and legal sectors lead the list of U.S. industries with the highest automation potential, while construction remains at the lower end due to the hands-on, physical nature of its tasks.

3. Universal Basic Income (UBI): Promise and Weaknesses

- UBI offers unconditional cash support and can cushion households during transition, reduce poverty, and simplify welfare systems.
- Weaknesses: Cost of meaningful UBI is extremely high; enforcement and accountability are lacking; UBI does not build skill pathways; equity concerns.

4. A Citizen Workforce Protection Agency via Executive Order

- Executive action is the only lever fast enough to set procurement conditions, disclosure rules, and enforcement thresholds now.

- Structure & Powers: Mandatory automation disclosure; enforcement tools; receivership/trustee power; retraining & wage insurance; equity/gain sharing.
- Citizen Oversight & Accountability: Rotating, diverse citizen commissions; transparent dashboards; legal safeguards and appeal rights.

5. National Security & Existential Stakes

- Unmanaged displacement undermines tax bases, strains public services, and frays social cohesion—core components of national resilience.
- If automation proceeds without public oversight, we risk drifting toward command-style power structures devoid of democratic accountability.

6. Objections & Safeguards

- To prevent overreach: clear legal thresholds, due process, appeal mechanisms, and limits on emergency powers.
- Cost concerns addressed via automation dividends, productivity surcharges, procurement leverage.
- Guarding against capture: rotating citizen panels; independent auditing; transparency in decision-making.

7. Recommended First Steps

1. Issue an Executive Order establishing the WPA and baseline powers: disclosure, procurement conditions, enforcement, wage insurance.
2. Amend federal contracting policy to require automation impact reporting and mitigation.
3. Pilot WPA in high-automation sectors or states.
4. Build a coalition (labor, think-tanks, national security community) for broader adoption.

8. Awakening Series & Future Papers

This paper is part of the Awakening Series, exploring AI disruption, democratic agency, enforcement, and governance. Future papers will cover funding models, sector analyses, international comparisons, and constitutional implications.

9. Conclusion

AI's disruption is here. Policy is behind. UBI alone is insufficient. What is required now is a citizen-led agency with real enforcement powers—launched by Executive Order—capable of protecting livelihoods, preserving democratic values, and safeguarding national stability. Delay is no longer an option.

About the Authors

Andrew R. Tolleson, MS, PE, D.GE is a licensed professional engineer with over 25 years' experience in civil and geotechnical engineering, infrastructure and strategic planning. He holds a U.S. provisional patent in neural-net feature extraction, has completed coursework in artificial intelligence, and collaborates with state, local, and federal government to design enforcement-oriented policy tools for preserving workforce agency during automation.

ChatGPT is an AI language model developed by OpenAI (GPT-4 family, updated through 2025), co-author in the sense of assisting with research, drafting, structuring, and editorial support. All content is reviewed and curated by the primary author.

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