

Huge support for ready-to-work plan will put 40,000 unemployed San Antonians in jobs

By Jim Lefko - Wednesday, November 4th 2020

SAN ANTONIO - More than three-fourths of local voters supported the city's Ready to Work proposition. That's an overwhelming mandate to help get tens of thousands of people who lost their jobs to Covid-19 trained and reemployed.



Virginia Mata worked hard to get Prop. B passed. (SBG photo)

"I do think it has the ability to assist a lot of out-of-work workers like myself," says Jake Tucker, who supported the proposition, albeit a little reluctantly because he thinks there is a more pressing need.

"What we need is immediate jobs right now.

Tucker has been laid off since the pandemic hit. He has spent the last seven years at the Grand Hyatt in convention services.

While he would like to return to his job, he realizes the convention industry may not recover for an extended period of time.

"On the balance, I think it's better than nothing," Tucker says.

"For those that want to go into a new career, or want to develop those skills, there's absolutely value in workforce training. I am glad it's something. There are so many people that it can support."



Left: Jake Tucker has been out of work since Covid-19 shut down the local convention industry. (SBG photo) Right: Grand Hyatt Hotel has seen its convention business evaporate since the pandemic hit. (SBG photo)

Forty thousand to be exact. That's how many unemployed people will benefit from the \$154 million generated by the one-eighth cent sales tax revenue that had been going to aquifer protection and greenway trail development.

Prop B drew nearly 77 percent of [the vote](#), about 10 percent more than the VIA tax, which coincidentally is where the 1/8-cent tax will go after the workforce development program ends in four years.

Pre-K 4 SA also passed with over 73 percent of the vote.

It's the SA Ready to Work proposition that galvanized local groups like **COPS/Metro**, along dozens of churches on the south and west side of San Antonio.

"It's a game changer for San Antonio," says Virginia Mata, a [COPS/Metro](#) leader who is affiliated with Holy Family Church. She's also a retired Navy lieutenant commander.

"COPS/Metro just really set the stage for San Antonio to become a leader in changing the systemic issues that have been here for generations," Mata says.

Training will be available in areas where jobs are plentiful, like health care, cybersecurity, manufacturing and information technology.

"Those are the key industries that we saw that there is a need for," Mata says. "We consulted with experts in different fields and worked hard with partners to come up with this plan."

The program is modeled after [Project Quest](#), with a goal of changing lives and helping "people go from poverty to high wage, high paying jobs," she says.

"We did the right thing and San Antonio responded. We've seen what (Covid-19) has done to our front line workers. It's hit the Hispanic community and the Black community really hard. I think San Antonio sees that a change is needed - and they responded."