

Senator Schumer Opening Remarks
Third AI Insight Forum
November 1, 2023

Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the U.S. Senate's third bipartisan AI Insight Forum, focused on AI's impact on the workforce.

Thank you to my colleagues in our bipartisan AI gang – Senators Rounds, Heinrich, and Young – who have helped make today's forum possible.

I also want to thank my Senate colleagues for making the time to be here, even if just for a little bit. We had good, bipartisan turnout during our first two forums, and I'm sure we'll see the same thing again throughout the morning.

Of course, I want to thank all of our participants here today.

It has been a top priority for us to assemble balanced, diverse, and wide-ranging views for our forums, a priority that continues for today's forum.

Today, we will begin to address some of the very real concerns for workers posed by AI. And to not only understand those challenges but most importantly, to develop real solutions, we'll need everyone at the table – labor, tech, advocates, critics – to ensure we are maximizing the benefits of AI for workers and minimizing the risks.

Our discussion will be divided into two one-hour segments:

Senator Young and I will lead the first segment, talking about the risks AI poses to workers, including job loss, workplace surveillance, and other loss of human power in the workplace.

And in the second segment, Senators Rounds and I will lead a discussion on opportunities for workers in the age of AI.

Right now, one of the major questions people are asking is: will AI take my job?

They have every right to be concerned. Globalization is a good cautionary tale.

Many heralded globalization as a turning point for prosperity and growth, but decades later, we can agree that while it may have increased wealth, that came at the cost of millions of jobs that were shipped overseas. That economic pain is still felt today and has had a negative cascading effect on local economies across the country.

Today, we find ourselves once again at a similar crossroads when it comes to AI.

On one hand, AI will create real opportunities.

AI will create new jobs we cannot even comprehend of today.

If done right, AI innovation can drive new growth in regions across the country.

There will be new opportunities for government and the private sector to partner to ensure that the technologies of the future are made here in America.

But on the other hand, AI poses real threats to the workforce – not just in job displacement, but also changes to existing jobs as more and more are augmented by AI technologies.

AI – particularly generative AI – is already disrupting the way tens of millions of people make a living.

Low-income workers – many from communities of color – are at risk of displacement and disempowerment in the workplace. But AI will also reshape the knowledge economy – workers in banking, media, law are now at risk – jobs many assumed would always be safe.

The impacts of AI will not be confined to any one sector of the workforce or any one region of the country. It will affect every sector, everywhere.

So, the question before us today is: how can Congress work to instill guardrails that maximize AI's benefits to the workforce, while minimizing its very real risks?

Congress was far too slow to aid Americans who needed help with globalization. We can't repeat the same mistake when it comes to AI.

We'll need an all-hands on deck approach to fully tackle AI. That's why I was proud to see President Biden sign the first-ever artificial intelligence Executive Order on Monday.

The President's Executive Order includes important first steps in mitigating the risks of job displacement and disruption related to AI, as well as protecting workers' rights and privacy.

Today's bipartisan forum is an additional important step to inform our efforts to build off of the President's action and develop bipartisan AI legislation.

The U.S. must lead in this critical technology. In doing so, however, it is imperative that we invest in sustainable innovation and put in place the guardrails needed to protect against AI's risks.

That includes protecting workers, investing in their skills and upholding their workplace rights. Part of U.S. leadership in AI is ensuring this technology reflects our values, and central to that must be the rights and prosperity of our workers.

That's why we brought you all here today: to listen and learn from you, and use your insights to supplement the bipartisan work in our committees.

So, thank you all for being here, and I look forward to our discussion.