



Listening. Learning. Leading.

America's Perfect Storm

In Sebastian Junger's bestselling book *The Perfect Storm*, forces of nature combine into a devastating storm of the century. If there were a social science version of Junger's tale, then the United States is in its midst—a perfect storm that's threatening American prosperity and tearing at our political cohesion.

A new ETS report says three forces underlie this tempest:

- economic restructuring that places a premium on literacy and numeracy skills
- uneven distribution of these skills
- sweeping demographic trends that are changing the population and workforce

As the report puts it, "The three sets of forces ... are each powerful in their own right. But as they interact over time, their consequences can be truly momentous." For the United States, those consequences include widening economic disparities and political and social polarization.

The report, *America's Perfect Storm: Three Forces Changing Our Nation's Future*, raises a fundamental question: What do we want for our country? Do



we want to continue on a course that could transform the American dream into an American tragedy? Or should we invest in policies to help restore the broadly shared prosperity we enjoyed in the decades after World War II?

Put simply, we can grow together, or we can grow apart.

It sounds like an easy choice, especially given how important economic growth and stability are to realizing our potential and maintaining our democratic ideals. It's axiomatic that societies are more dynamic, more inclusive and more adaptable when people see

the future as bright and secure.

We can still act decisively to ensure a bright, secure future for our children and our country. But we're running out of time: We're not approaching this perfect storm; we're already in it.

At ETS, we're doing our part. We're listening to educators, parents and policymakers. We're learning from sound research. And we're leading the effort to achieve informed public policy and informed educational practice.

For more information, read *America's Perfect Storm* online at www.ets.org/stormreport.

Continue the conversation. Log On. Let's Talk. www.ets.org.



KURT M. LANDGRAF,
PRESIDENT & CEO, ETS