

ABC Empire State Chapter

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ABC 'Turns the Table' on the Unions by using the 'CAT' to Announce Petition Drive Against Apprenticeship Ordinance

ABC has used various tactics aimed at voicing our objections with apprenticeship mandates. On May 24th, in the Town of Huntington, more than 75 ABC members and other merit shop contractors staged a major petition drive and demonstration in an effort to seek repeal of a year-old law that requires developers of private commercial construction projects of 100,000 square feet or more in the town to use only contractors and subcontractors with New York State registered apprenticeship programs. In effect, the law gives union contractors a virtual monopoly on large development projects within Huntington. It's the first law of its kind in the nation, and one that is being closely watched by other municipalities in the region and across the state. "This law was passed under the guise of creating more training opportunities to bring skilled workers into the building trades, but its real intent is to restrict competition by rendering the majority of local contractors, and their workers, ineligible to work on construction projects," said Rebecca Meinking. "Restricting competition increases costs, and drives contractors out of NY State."

"Local Law 16-2005 is bad for business, bad for local workers and bad for local taxpayers," said Allan Binder. "When union organizations claim that they are the "working families" and that if unionized firms don't get the jobs, developers and contractors are against "working families" Binder said. "That begs the question of who are the real working families. We think the real working families are those workers and their families who make up the overwhelming majority of the construction workforce". According to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, only 13 percent of the nation's construction workers are unionized and, in New York State, the percentage is 25 percent. "These families also need to work, pay their taxes, bring up their families in Huntington, and are vital to our future", says Allan.

Apprenticeship program requirements for private construction work deny the majority of local contractors the ability to bid on local projects and thereby deny local workers the chance to work on those projects.

"Is it right for the Town of Huntington to dictate to a private developer who he uses to build a building he owns?" asked Ruth Mulford.



"Because of this Huntington ordinance, 30 non-union contractors who would normally be working on a 109,000-square-foot building in Melville have been shut out of that job. Many of those contractors, and the local workers they employ, live and work within the town of Huntington. and they vote!"

There are only two non-union companies in the Town of Huntington who have apprenticeship programs. In order to meet the requirements of this ordinance, a contractor must go through a process that takes several months, Mulford noted. And not all contractors can meet the terms and conditions set by the state to maintain an apprenticeship program long term.

Advocates of the Huntington law and similar laws that govern construction of public projects have suggested that apprenticeship programs will mean improved training for construction workers and that these programs will attract more workers into the construction industry. In reality, over the past four years, the number of active apprentices in New York State has actually declined from approximately 24,000 apprentices in 2002 to just over 22,000 apprentices in 2006. ABC estimates that the number will continue to decline.

ABC contends that the law is an unreasonable intrusion by government into private construction, and we will continue to fight against this unreasonable and onerous law until it is repealed.

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Study Finds That Project Labor Agreements Increase Costs for School Construction in New York
School districts can expect to pay 20% more in school construction costs if they enter into “union only” agreements

A new study by the Beacon Hill Institute at Suffolk University in Boston concludes that Project Labor Agreements (PLAs), which effectively limit municipalities seeking to build new schools to union only contracts, increase actual construction costs by 20% over publicly funded projects without such restrictive and discriminatory requirements. These findings were based on an analysis of construction costs for 117 schools in the state of New York. The study, the first of its kind in the Empire State, found that PLAs add an estimated \$27 per square foot to the actual cost of construction in 2004 prices.

Of the schools examined, 19 entered into PLAs for school projects. The majority of school districts that chose NOT to enter into such agreements were able to save their taxpayers anywhere from \$2.7 million for a 100,000 square foot structure to \$8.1 million for a 300,000 square foot structure.

The study, funded by ABC, clearly substantiates the notion that restricting competition increases costs. “Given the budget constraints faced by almost every school district in the state, school boards and the hard working taxpayers they represent, should carefully consider the substantial additional costs that result when PLAs are utilized,” says Rebecca Meinking, President of Empire State ABC.

For a complete copy of the study, visit our website at www.abcnys.org/pdf/PressPLA0519NY.pdf

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