

Green Jobs

ISSUE:

“Green Jobs” is a buzz phrase being used in the political arena to describe work that is environmentally-friendly, both inside and outside the construction industry. However, there is no clear and agreed upon definition. Currently, organized labor is attempting to define “green jobs” as positions held by workers that receive special green training through union-only apprenticeship programs.

Organized labor and certain special interest groups claim that only union apprenticeship programs can properly train workers to build green projects. However, these claims are nothing more than an effort to monopolize the construction workforce on green building and other construction projects. Most green building techniques involve simple architectural changes or using environmentally-friendly building materials, which requires that workers learn skills that can be taught through both union and non-union training programs.

In December 2007 President Bush signed into law H.R. 6, the “Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007”, Public Law No: 110-140. Title X of this legislation made \$125 million available to invest in a renewable energy worker training program. However, the statutory language only allows organizations associated with labor unions to apply for these grants. It is vital that mandatory, union-only apprenticeship guidelines are not made a condition for eligibility to receive federal grant money. Merit shop contractors should not be excluded from projects that are made possible by this federal funding.

Title X will significantly reduce the role of America’s businesses community in the training of workers. This provision greatly expands government bureaucracy and needlessly benefits labor unions at the expense of full and open competition by allowing unions to assume a major role through legislated training partnerships and in mandated consultation of potential grant proposals.

IMPACT:

ABC fears that these union-only training funds will be used by organized labor in attempting to attach union apprenticeship requirements to green projects in order to limit the ability of merit shop contractors to compete for these projects. These exclusionary limitations subject green projects to the inefficiency and waste that comes with union-only construction. Merit shop contractors have been successfully completing green projects for over fifteen years. With more and more projects going green, union-only apprenticeship requirements exclude 86% of the private construction industry, the workforce of merit shop contractors, from working on a growing segment of future construction

STATUS:

In the 110th Congress, at the request of ABC, Congressman Johns Kline (R-MN) introduced the “Green Jobs Improvement Act” which would amend the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to make non-union training programs eligible for Federal funding under the “Green Jobs” program.

During the 110th Congress ABC will continue to push Members of Congress to support this legislation and to educate them on the detrimental impacts of cutting our non-union training programs from accessing these funds.

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