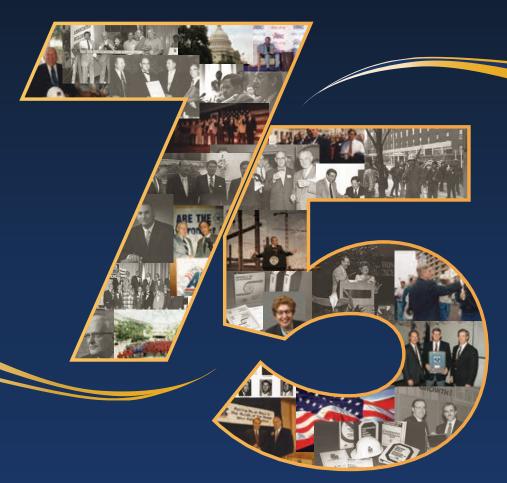




Associated Builders and Contractors

Building America for 75 Years



From the Ground Up: How Merit Shop Construction Transformed the Industry



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Celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2025, Associated Builders and Contractors is a national construction industry trade association established in 1950 with 67 chapters and more than 23,000 members. Founded on the merit shop philosophy, ABC helps members develop people, win work and deliver that work safely, ethically and profitably for the betterment of the communities in which ABC and its members work. Visit us at abc.org.





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John Trimmer,
ABC's executive
vice president,
and Samuel Cook,
author of "Freedom
in the Workplace,"
celebrate the
association's victory
over trade unions
in 1973-1974 at
the National Labor
Relations Board.

FOREWORD

ABC 75TH ANNIVERSARY

Assembled by ABC President and CEO Michael D. Bellaman with quotations and excerpts from chapter 6 of "Freedom in the Workplace," by Samuel Cook

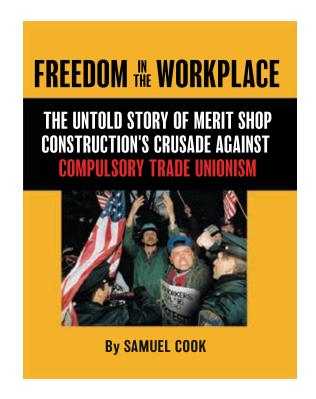
IN THE WORDS OF JOHN TRIMMER AND SAMUEL COOK

By the spring of 1952, ABC had 210 contractors, and it was determined that the association could afford to hire its first executive vice president. On March 20, the board of directors chose John P. Trimmer, a native of York, Pennsylvania, who studied organizational management at Yale and Michigan State universities.

His first job was editor of The Gazette and Daily News in York, Pennsylvania, and soon his obvious talent secured his employment by the Associated Press to cover Maryland legislative activities. Subsequently, he became the first director of the Maryland State Department of Information. The scholarly and conservative Trimmer "admired the contractors' entrepreneurial spirit" and, at the age of 38, he began to build ABC's brand and structure.

On the philosophical side, Trimmer affirmed ABC was organized "to support the open shop" and its chief purpose was "to gain a business climate where union and nonunion firms can work together in harmony." Over time he concluded, "I found that 'open shop' connotated 'anti-union' and so I coined the phrase merit shop." The objective, he explained was "to emphasize that these new words would denote a fair and economical way of workplace life." He added, "They mean that construction projects are awarded on the competitive basis of meritorious performance rather than an employer's union or nonunion status and employees are rewarded on the basis of their individual merit. It's a way of life worth clinging to and fighting for in an era when special interests threaten to engulf the free enterprise system."

Trimmer captured these thoughts in an original draft of four principles which became the foundation for ABC's purpose and objectives.



"First, it is in the public's best interest that all construction contracts be awarded to the lowest responsible bidder through open and fair competition, regardless of union or nonunion affiliation. This practice assures the consumer of the best possible job for the dollars paid.

"Second, management has the right to direct the activities of its business according to the policies and goals established by its own leaders, searching for efficiency and productivity in every step of the way.

"Third, each employee in a merit shop company should have the voluntary choice to belong or refrain from belonging to a labor organization and should be paid and promoted based on his or her skills, initiative and responsibility for individual accomplishment rather than employment seniority alone.

"Fourth, discrimination based on race, color, nationality, sex, religion or creed is contrary to the spirit of the Republic of the United States and harmful to our nation morally and economically."



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to acknowledge the entire ABC family, past, present and future. Allow me to begin with the employees of ABC. We all are grateful to every ABC employee across the country, as they are the critical infrastructure of our association. I honestly believe that being the president and CEO of Associated Builders and Contractors is the best job in the construction industry. ABC presidents and CEOs and all executive leaders, both at the national and chapter level, are truly blessed to have this opportunity and, with great respect, I want to acknowledge and thank those who came before us.

In the foreword of this book, we shared the words of John Trimmer, the first chief executive hired by ABC. John brought clarity by facilitating the sculpting of ABC's purpose and objectives. The earliest copy of ABC's purpose (ABC Bylaws, Article I) that I have seen was approved by the ABC National Board of Directors in 1960. Our purpose and objectives serve as our "true north compass" which we all have a duty and loyalty to. Thank you, John. Join me in also recognizing all the chief executives who led ABC from its founding 75 years ago, who all embody the merit shop philosophy.

Next, thank you to the contractor members of ABC. You are the lifeblood of this association. A movement that originated with seven members has now grown to 15,618 of the best construction companies in America. I want to thank the 7,404 supplier and associate members of ABC, as your collective support and commitment to the success of our contractors and the industry is imperative. To this group of over 23,000 members and the millions who you employ, I appreciate your leadership and commitment to the merit shop. These member companies offer up their talent to be volunteer leaders. You give us your time and financial support, and with grace, we accept and convert those precious resources into value for the industry. You are the reason why we can attract and retain the best employee talent in the association industry.

Together, we are the voice of the merit shop. As one team, we are fully aligned around our purpose and objectives. We take on the

responsibility to make our voice heard, as we believe this movement is for the betterment of the individual, the industry and the nation. We share a belief that every individual has been given unique gifts and has distinct dreams. We believe that everyone should be given the opportunity to choose their path, informed by their desire and their passion, to compete on a fair and level field and to achieve their career dreams.

Collectively, we have made immense contributions to an industry that now employs more than 8 million people, adds over \$2 trillion annually to our economy and creates spectacular places that lift up our communities and enhance our lives in every way. We build America.

The industry and the nation have been shaped by ABC in ways that are measurable and immeasurable. Our uncompromising commitment to health and safety has transformed into a belief that everyone should go

home safe, healthy, happy and fulfilled at the end of each workday. Our investment of billions of dollars in workforce development has created the conditions for millions to achieve their career dreams. Our voice and advocacy have preserved freedom of choice so everyone in the industry has the opportunity to be the author of their own future.

There are so many stories. The history of our industry is well documented, and we have triumphed over these 75 years, thanks to your leadership and to those who led before us.

For all who are reading about ABC's history in this 75th anniversary book, I encourage you to also read about the first 50 years of ABC in

Specifically, it is

important to thank and acknowledge these leaders:

The Founders
Phillip Cloyes
Edward Colwill
Edward Dickinson
Charles Knott
Charles Mullan
Ernest Schultz
Clifford Wells Jr.

Samuel Cook's book, "Freedom in the Workplace: The Untold Story of the Merit Shop Construction's Crusade Against Compulsory Trade

Unionism." Once you read them both, you will have an in-depth understanding of the ABC journey to date.

The next question is, where do we go from here?

I firmly believe we are the authors of our future. The question is, who will be the authors? Who will be the leaders? What is the next industry disruption? When will we see the next industry transformation? How will we construct buildings in the year 3000? What innovations will materialize?

Will we still have the freedom to choose our career paths—how to lead our businesses, how we transform our industry and how we build America?

I believe this is up to you, our future leaders, as volunteers, member companies and ABC employees.

May God bless your journey, grant you wisdom in your choices and shed His grace on thee, the industry and the nation.

—Michael D. Bellaman

President and CEO

Associated Builders and Contractors



John Trimmer, 1952-1976 executive vice president, known as "Mr. ABC." He coined the phrase "merit shop" and solidified the merit shop philosophy through his work.

INTRODUCTION

Construction touches everything and everyone. Think about your town or city and every piece of infrastructure in it. Do you live near an airport? How about a hospital, library or school, bridge, government building or an office park? Is there a power station, energy refinery, water or waste treatment facility or a military base nearby? All of these structures, places, facilities and services are created by America's construction industry.

Construction contractors and their workers build our communities, shape our history and design our future. They create and recreate our modern world. This work enables communities to grow and thrive, building the industrial and commercial infrastructure that keeps societies alive and ticking. Our national security is dependent on construction, too, because critical infrastructure like power plants, communications networks, transportation hubs and military installations rely on the skills of builders and contractors.

A functioning society needs continuity of services like water, power and food. Roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, refineries, factories, stadiums and offices create essential spaces where communities live and thrive. What we buy and use has a shelf life; it wears out, spoils or becomes obsolete.

What construction creates—these systems we all depend on—are built to last, with maintenance, resilience to natural disasters and protection against potential threats keeping us safe, productive and prosperous. Construction is truly one of the largest, most consequential, most innovative industries in the United States.

It's also our nation's biggest small business success story: one of teamwork, loyalty and collaboration that has led many family-owned businesses to withstand countless tidal shifts and grow into major enterprises.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Construction is so large and central to our economy that, as of 2024, the industry as a whole is valued at about \$2.1 trillion, making it among the nation's most important economic indicators. Where it goes, so goes our nation's economy, and anticipating what's around the corner in construction is how billions of dollars are allocated every year. It also has a multiplier effect on our economy because the money spent on construction projects circulates multiple times. Creating spaces for people to work, live and conduct business creates wealth in our communities.

Building accounts for about 4.5% of the country's gross domestic product, more than agriculture, mining, utilities and all of the transportation sector. Construction has about the same financial impact as *all* spending on entertainment, the arts, hospitality and every restaurant in the United States, meaning few other industries contribute as much economic growth to our massive and collective bottom line. It also dictates where we're going, socially and economically, as it literally brings people together. Construction focuses on the future, building for generations to come.

This industry creates lifelong careers, supports local businesses and truly builds the backbone of America. Creating space and opportunity for more and larger businesses leads to more jobs. More jobs lead to greater opportunity and prosperity, leading to more innovation and growth—and the cycle of advancement continues.

Our economy depends on the entrepreneurship of small business owners with big ideas. Entrepreneurs develop new products, services and technologies by finding new ways to solve old problems. Their work fosters competition, leading to improvements in quality and efficiency, and spurs progress across all industries.

Our stable, effective and modern country is the story of construction, and for the last 75 years, construction has been the story of Associated Builders and Contractors.

Construction contractors and their workers build our communities, shape our history and design our future.



1950-1975



CHAPTER 1

FAIRNESS IN THE WORKPLACE

ABC BYLAWS, ARTICLE I - PRINCIPLES OF THE MERIT SHOP

Associated Builders and Contractors is the voice of the merit shop in the construction industry. We assume the responsibility of making that voice heard.

We believe that the merit shop movement is a movement for the betterment of the individual, the industry and the nation.

We believe in the system of free enterprise and open competition. We believe that employees and employers should have the right to determine wages and working conditions, through either individual or collective bargaining, as they choose, within the boundaries of the law.

We believe that the employer must have concern for the general welfare of the employee and that there must be fair compensation for work performed. By the same token, we believe that the employee has an obligation for satisfactory performance of assigned work.

We support sound legislation in the areas of workers' compensation, safety, and unemployment compensation. We believe legislation that embraces fair play for both employer and employee is essential to the preservation of our free enterprise system.

The law should protect the right of employees to work regardless of race, color, creed, age, sex, national origin, membership or nonmembership in a labor organization or other protected class.

We oppose violence, coercion, intimidation and the denial of the

rights of both employees and management.

We believe that the economy is incumbent upon all branches of government and that government should award contracts to the lowest responsible bidder only. We oppose any unjust pressure to violate these principles.

We believe that work opportunities in this nation should be made available to all our people, regardless of race, color, creed, age, sex, national origin, membership or nonmembership in a labor organization, protected veteran status, qualified individuals with disabilities or other protected class, and we support programs towards this end.

We believe that monopolies or any kind of price- or wage-fixing in either the public or private sector are detrimental to our system of free enterprise.

We believe that the destiny of all Americans can best be served by cooperation and following the tenets of free enterprise and democratic government. We believe business leaders can best preserve these tenets by becoming active in politics and civic affairs.

The idea was simple, but transformative: Change how work is done. The merit shop philosophy is the foundational principle of 75 years of work, and a commitment to excellence in construction. ABC believes that work opportunities in the construction sector should be awarded based on *merit*, regardless of labor affiliation. The philosophy promotes a free-market approach and recognizes the value of open competition, encouraging businesses to compete *fairly*, based on the quality of work, skills and efficiency.

The merit shop philosophy prioritizes excellence in the industry, high standards, health and safety, integrity and employee freedom of choice, rather than mandatory union membership.

ABC's advocacy efforts have gone a long way to creating a more favorable environment for meritbased construction companies.

The merit shop philosophy prioritizes excellence in the industry, high standards, health and safety, integrity and employee freedom of choice, rather than mandatory union membership. It is inclusive, defends the rights and freedoms of all workers and allows the best contractors to win work, regardless of where it comes from.

ABC raises the bar for all of construction, elevating safety performance, educating millions of people and creating a national organization that, project by project, changes our communities for the better. ABC enables members, businesses, communities and the country to grow, creating pride to be part of an organization that saw the future and built it.

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

The first half of the 20th century in the United States was a period of profound transformation, marked by massive social, economic and political changes, challenging the nation's strength and testing the people's will. It was a time of immense growth, setting the stage for

modern America: a place where virtually anything was possible, due entirely to a hard-working population eager to build peace, stability, prosperity and jobs.

From 1900 to 1950, America's population nearly doubled, from 76 million to about 151 million people, driven by immigration, a massive post-war baby boom and a thriving economy. This astonishing growth set the stage for America's mid-20th century global influence and economic expansion. Average Americans could afford a quality of life unimaginable just 50 years earlier.

By 1950, legislative and social mandates required the country to build as much as possible, from coast to coast. This tide of opportunity was lifting all boats, cementing America's global brand as the best place to innovate, developing new and big ideas and changing how anything and everything was done. ABC leaders saw an opportunity for the construction industry to galvanize demographic shifts, a thriving economy and a skilled labor force to meet the tremendous needs of a population that doubled seemingly overnight.

Left: Congressional passage of the Taft-Hartley Act helped modernize the construction industry. Right: Robert A. Taft, author of the famous Taft-Hartley

Act of 1947.





TAFT-HARTLEY AND THE LABOR LANDSCAPE

The midcentury construction boom emerged from a period of bust, when the nation was in the grips of the Great Depression and labor tensions were at an all-time high.

The Wagner Act of 1935 established the National Labor Relations Board, giving about 2.5 million people who worked in construction and the skilled trades the right to form and join unions. It was a landmark piece of legislation, aiming to protect workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively with their employers. Signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt as part of the New Deal, the act laid the foundation for labor rights in the United States.

But business leaders pushed back against the stronghold unions had over the building industry. By the 1940s, nearly all construction workers were required to join a union to work. This limited their opportunities and, ultimately, their freedom.

Labor unions, and the violence, strikes and intimidation that sometimes accompanied their organizing, dictated the speed of what the nation could build. Labor unions also held a grip on what could be built, slowing down innovation and progress.

With the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act, Congress paved the way for transformative modernization across all industries, but none more so than in construction. Outlawing closed shops and allowing rightto-work laws, Taft-Hartley revolutionized the workplace. Taft-Hartley's amendments responded to the need to abandon the "one size fits all" and the "with us or against us" approach of organized labor. The legislation balanced the rights of labor unions and employers and began to impose restrictions on union-organizing activities.

The impact of the Taft-Hartley Act cannot be overstated. Creating an alternative to labor unions allowed workers to have more opportunity than they had prior to 1947. One could choose to join a union, but membership was not a requirement, paving the way for freedom in the workplace for millions of hardworking people. Workers could make their own choices, protected from the pressure of union influence or aggression. Controlling excessive union influence



Charles Mullan's home, where the founders of ABC first met to discuss its creation.

contributed to America's economic stability by leveling the playing field and removing a barrier to entry for those who wanted to work in construction, but without the restrictions of a labor union being dictated to them.

Gone were restrictions on who employers could hire. Secondary boycotts, in which unions were permitted to pressure a company by targeting their business partners or competitors, were banned, and states could no longer require union membership as a condition of employment.

Additionally, Taft-Hartley prohibited jurisdictional strikes, where unions often fought about how work was assigned. It also allowed the government to intervene, enabling the president to seek a court injunction to temporarily halt strikes that threatened national security or public health, for an 80-day "cooling-off" period.

Taft-Hartley contributed to a long-term decline in union power, particularly in private sector industries, and set the stage for the modern labor landscape in the United States, where right-to-work

laws and limited strike options shape union strategies and influence.

Over the next few generations, the country would witness an explosion of construction projects, both public and private, that would change the face of the United States forever.

THE MERIT SHOP WAS BORN

The independent contractor—the entrepreneur—who wanted to excel based on merit, as opposed to seniority, didn't have a representative voice at the bargaining table of labor relations.

As unions held massive political and economic power, a group of visionary contractors saw the need for change. In 1950, facing union threats and fierce resistance, seven contractors met at the house of Charlie Mullan in Baltimore, where they founded Associated Builders and Contractors, responding to the need to innovate in an industry on which the entire country depended.

Open shop general contractors Charles Knott and Ed Colwill,



Four of ABC's founders (left to right) Edward Colwill, Philip Cloves, Charles Mullan and Charles Knott.

who along with Mullan, were on a hit list of local mob leader Clark "Kingfish" Ellis, garnered support from both nonunion and union subcontractors and specialists. Ernest Schultz, a nonunion sheet metal contractor, Edward Dickinson, a nonunion homebuilder, and Clifford Wells Jr., an architect-developer, joined with unionized tile and terrazzo subcontractor Philip Cloyes to form the pioneering team who wrote ABC's bylaws.

Together, they vowed to defend the rights of open shop contractors and work smarter, more effectively and with less unjust union control of their time, money and expertise. Mullan became the first president of the new organization: "A voluntary association for the mutual aid and protection of all Maryland general contractors and specialty subcontractors working together, in harmony, regardless of their union or non-union affiliation," according to "Freedom in the Workplace."

"The unions wanted to put [us] and our open shops out of business. None of us wanted that to happen so—even though we were

competitors—we decided to form a group and fight," Mullan is quoted in the book.

In 1952, ABC hired the organization's first executive vice president, John Trimmer and, just two years later, approximately 500 member companies had joined ABC from Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Washington, D.C.

Growth followed quickly. In 1957, the ABC Insurance Trust was established, providing insurance benefits to members, pooling resources to negotiate favorable insurance terms. ABC's first chapter, ABC Eastern Shore, was chartered, and its first construction fair drew more than 3,000 people. The two-day exhibit set the record for the biggest industrial fair in Maryland at the time. Building on nearly a decade of growth, ABC held its first national convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in 1958.

What seemed like a simple idea was growing to not only transform the entire industry but also to raise the bar for excellence in construction. Education and workforce development expanded as core ABC



John Trimmer, left, at an ABC gathering in 1952.

principles, and teaching the next generation of builders and contractors grew to become central to the organization's mission.

The next decade fast-tracked ABC's expansion and, in 1960, ABC's apprenticeship footprint began in Baltimore with plumbing courses. In 1963, ABC launched a national safety program during its sixth annual convention, which would expand to change the whole industry in later decades.

ABC raises the bar for all of construction, elevating safety performance, educating millions of people and creating a national organization that, project by project, changes our communities for the better.



1950 Charles Mullan Mullan Contracting Baltimore General Contractor



1951 Charles Knott Henry A. Knott Inc. Baltimore General Contractor



1952-1953 Ed Colwill Colwill Construction Baltimore General Contractor



1954 Charles Feihe Mullan Contracting Baltimore General Contractor



1955 William Wildberger **Wildberger-Best Construction** Baltimore **General Contractor**



1956 **Roland Stolzenbach** Roland Electrical Co. **Baltimore Electrical Contractor**



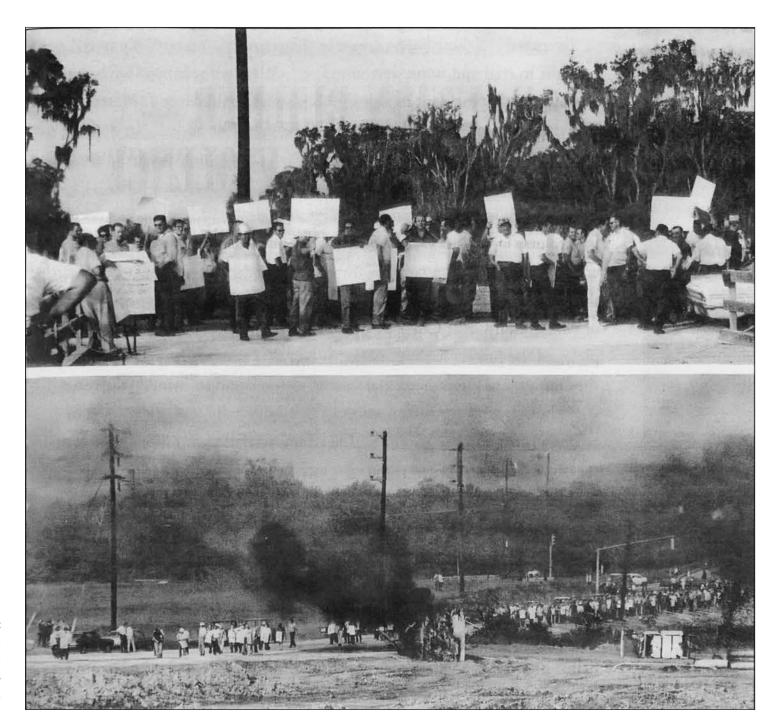
1957 **James Campbell** Harry T. Campbell & Sons Towson, Maryland **Concrete Contractor**

Photo unavailable

1958-1959 **Larry Best** Wildberger-Best Construction **Baltimore General Contractor**



Charles Chamberlain, executive director, Metro Baltimore chapter, and ABC National's director of education in the 1960s and 1970s.



Left and right: Trade union attacks on ABC contractors in Florida.



ESCAPE FROM VIOLENCE AND CORRUPTION

ABC's commonsense principles offered an alternative to a union landscape in which people were being targeted, attacked and even killed. Violence and corruption in labor unions were significant concerns in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, as the U.S. labor movement faced both external challenges and internal conflicts. During labor disputes, clashes between union members and strikebreakers or company-hired security forces were common, with disastrous consequences. Violence was rampant, particularly in construction, as was intimidation, sending a clear message: "Challenge union labor at your own peril." These were not idle threats.

A 1969 study of labor conflict violence by the National Labor Relations Board examined the era following passage of the Taft-Hartley Act and concluded that, although violence had abated, it still continued at dangerous levels. The NLRB estimated that 80 to 100 acts of violence by union members or supporters occurred each year, and most of the attacks on people were fights with strikebreakers crossing picket lines.

In some cases, union leadership used intimidation or violence to enforce discipline among members, particularly in industries where unions had a near-monopoly on labor, like construction. Organized crime had significant influence over some unions, leading to widespread corruption, extortion and brutality to maintain control or enforce illegal activities.

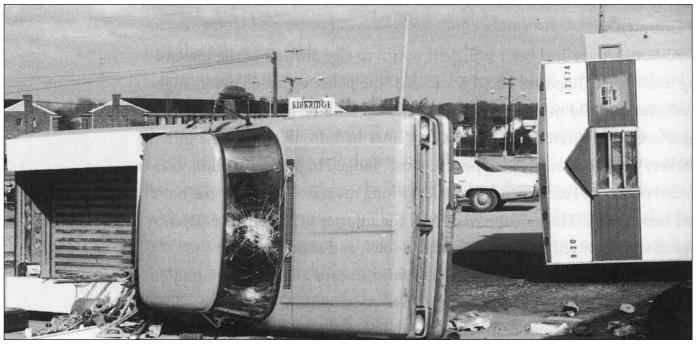
Though the violent incidents and corruption of the 1950s were exceptions rather than the rule, they had a lasting impact on the labor movement's public image and the regulatory landscape. Public perception shifted to consider some unions as radical, disruptive and un-American, reinforcing the idea that they fostered an environment of instability and unrest, as well as disrupted progress.

In the early 1950s, more than 80% of construction workers were union members. As knowledge of the merit shop philosophy grew as an alternative, that number steadily declined.

In the late 1950s, the U.S. Senate's McClellan Committee investigated corruption and violence associated with union activity and helped to reverse some of the damage to the construction industry. The hearings exposed organized crime's influence in the



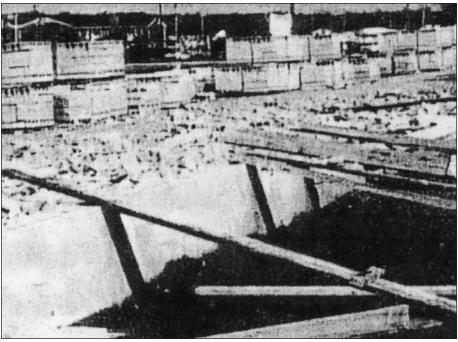
Left and right: Trade union attacks on ABC contractors in Michigan.

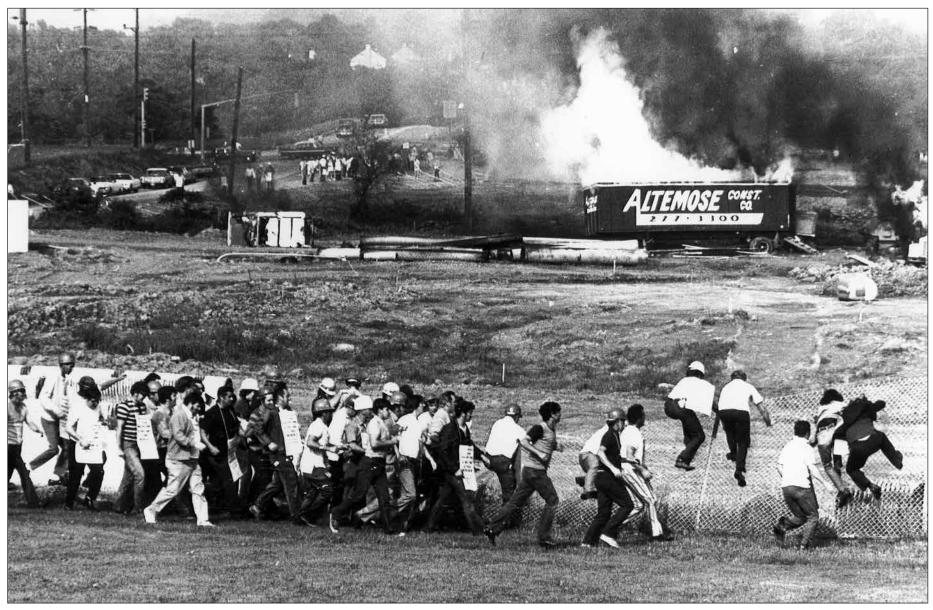












After standing up to threats by the Building & Trades Council of Philadelphia over his use of nonunion labor, ABC member J. Leon Altemose was targeted by union violence. In 1972, seven chartered buses and dozens of cars brought over 1,000 union construction workers to the jobsite where Altemose Construction Co. was working on the Valley Forge Plaza. The protest quickly erupted into violence, with over \$300,000 (about \$2.25 million adjusted for inflation) worth of property was destroyed.



In 1974, Twila Thompson was sent demands from Local Union No. 469 to unionize employees of her company Mother Thompson's Plumbing Co. She and her employees staged a "reverse strike" outside the union offices after the union picketed projects she was working on.



1965-1966 ABC
National Chair of the
Board of Directors
James Long presents
an award to the 1,500th
ABC member.

Teamsters, Longshoremen and other unions across construction. Testimony revealed how union leaders used violence and coercion, often in collusion with organized crime leaders, to maintain their grip on power.

A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

The merit shop philosophy afforded nonunion workers the freedom to make their own choices and be their own bosses. The simple idea that contractors and their employees could compete on the same level as union shops was nothing short of revolutionary. It allowed ABC members to win work fairly and do what they do best: build, share their knowledge and innovate, without the obstacles and restrictions of union interference.

The idea of the merit shop is profoundly democratic. The values of fairness, ethical dealing and a focus on safety and education helped ABC to build strength in numbers as membership continued to grow.

The core values were simple: Create fairness, through an environment in which competition is open and transparent, and reasonable people will commit to bettering the organization.

ABC helped create healthy competition among contractors, promoting open communication and building bridges across specialties. On a local level, networks of people worked together to share their knowledge and inspire new builders.

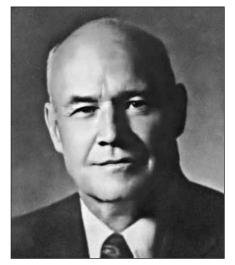
ABC was becoming a family of experts, in which a selfless effort from members—all committed to making ABC stronger—shaped the safety and ethical standards that hold members together today.

CURBING UNION AGGRESSION: THE 1959 LANDRUM-GRIFFIN ACT

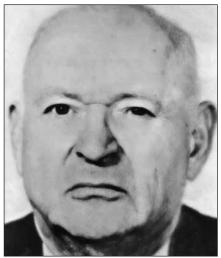
In 1959, another important labor milestone was passed into law: the Landrum-Griffin Act. Where Taft-Hartley focused on restricting the power of labor unions, the Landrum-Griffin Act aimed at regulating



1960 John Knott Henry A. Knott Inc. **Baltimore General Contractor**



1963-1964 **Tracy Coleman** Coleman & Wood Silver Spring, Maryland **General Contractor**



1961-1962 **Charles Marsh** Elevator Engineer Co. **Baltimore Elevator Contractor**



1965-1966 **James Long** Miller & Long Bethesda, Maryland **Concrete Contractor**

internal union affairs to increase transparency. It required unions to disclose financial information and imposed regulations on union officers and elections, which protected the rights of union members by ensuring transparency and accountability within their organizations.

Union members who felt as though their union leaders were not working toward their personal best interests had a choice. They could leave their union and find a home in any business with the open-door policy of the merit shop. It was no longer legally possible for unions to hide or manipulate their finances. Accountability won, further supporting the ideas of freedom and merit, the foundations of ABC.

This clarity forced unions to protect the interests of members, rather than controlling them. This made union leadership more accountable to their members, exactly as ABC was already doing. With transparency and honorable, fair dealing already at the heart of ABC, the organization had proven itself to be ahead of its time.

Importantly, the Landrum-Griffin Act also introduced a "bill of rights" for union members, which addressed gaps in both the Wagner Act and the Taft-Hartley Act. This tightened prohibitions on secondary boycotts and what were called "hot cargo agreements," under which employers committed themselves in advance to boycott any other employer involved in a dispute with the union. These unethical and potentially violent union actions were finally outlawed.

Secondary boycotts had been particularly disruptive to both workers and construction projects, and harmed people who were entirely removed from the conflicts of labor. This tactic in labor disputes enabled a union to apply pressure to an employer or business by urging people to boycott companies doing business with the employer they were in dispute with, essentially targeting a neutral third party. The harm to uninvolved businesses was considerable and totally unnecessary, damaging the reputations of companies that were essentially bystanders to union aggression.

CONNECTING THE COUNTRY: THE FEDERAL-AID HIGHWAY ACT CREATES GROWTH

In 1956, the Federal-Aid Highway Act, also known as the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act, established an interstate

highway system in the United States. This landmark piece of legislation, signed into law by President Dwight D. Eisenhower on June 29, 1956, is considered one of the most transformative infrastructure projects in American history.

It's hard to conceive of a plan as audacious and important as the national interstate system, which added nearly 45,000 miles of nationally standardized roads to the country. The federal government paid for 90% of the \$25 billion cost for the project's transformative system and, over the course of a few years, this project did more to bring Americans together than any investment prior. Beyond making it easier to travel from place to place, President Eisenhower believed that the new highways would help the country defend itself against an atomic attack. Inspired by the German Autobahn he saw during World War II, President Eisenhower brought the expertise of all construction disciplines together to build roads.

Building roads meant building communities. Roads also allowed for the suburbanization of America, as many families left cities for more space. And as people relocated to suburban areas, the infrastructure around them needed to grow to supply all their needs, leading to a significant uptick in commercial construction activity.

Simultaneously, the undercurrent of nuclear threat meant that nearly 80% of the public believed a major conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union was imminent. In the event of war, 70 million urban residents required evacuation by road. Large-scale evacuation wasn't possible without an interstate highway system, and civil defense authorities warned that, if the conflict escalated, moving millions of Americans out of harm's way would be impossible and would lead to massive casualties.

When construction of the Interstate Highway System began in earnest, just four weeks after President Eisenhower signed the bill into law, a testing facility was created in central Illinois to evaluate pavement, road standards and construction techniques. Over a two-year period, U.S. Army trucks drove back and forth on test roads near Chicago, assessing what worked. Some vehicles carried blocks of concrete in an effort to see how long a 24-ton truck would



1967-1968 Fred Schnabel Andrichyn & Schnabel Landsdale, Pennsylvania General Contractor



1971-1972 Joseph LaMonaca Joseph LaMonaca Inc. Pennsylvania General Contractor



1969-1970
John Lochary
Property Construction
Baltimore
General Contractor



1973-1974 Michael Callas Callas Contractors Hagerstown, Maryland General Contractor

take to destroy roads and bridges. The first standards of highway building and maintenance were developed from these tests.

During this two-year period, an enormous amount of knowledge was gathered, as the performance of pavement sections was closely monitored. This research and development, paid for by the federal government, has been applied across the industry, making the highway system not only crucial to commerce, but also for establishing quality control standards that exist today.

So began the largest construction challenge the country had ever seen. This partnership between the federal government and the states meant that millions of construction jobs were created nationwide over the course of decades. In terms of building our modern country, nothing compares to the contribution made by these roads and by the workers who created them.

By 1960, there were nearly 62 million cars on America's roads, and over 10,000 miles of interstate had opened to drivers. Year after year and decades later, tens of thousands of additional miles were added, connecting every corner of the country. President Eisenhower's plan of eliminating unsafe roads, inefficient routes, traffic jams and replacing them with "speedy, safe transcontinental travel" was under way.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF OSHA: DANGEROUS WORK GETS GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT

Construction, like many other industries, had a safety problem. Too many people got hurt, too often, and without nearly enough attention paid to prevention. In the 1950s and 1960s, disabling injuries were common, and over 2,000 workers were dying on the job each year.

Workers often lacked protective equipment and safety gear, like harnesses, hardhats, gloves, eye and skin protection. Early on, workers used considerably less heavy machinery, leaving them to do a great deal more manual labor and increasing the risk of injury. Toxic asbestos was a common building material, used in insulation, plaster, roofing, siding, textured paint, vinyl floor tiles and asphalt.



Rev. Leon H. Sullivan accepts ABC's 1968 "Man of the Year" award.

ABC's advocacy efforts have gone a long way to creating a more favorable environment for merit-based construction companies.

In 1970, about 2.5 million workplace injuries occurred in the United States, across all industries. Only 38 states had workplace health and safety programs in place, and many of these programs were very limited in scope.

Public outcry against rising injury and death rates on the job had reached a deafening pitch. Workers and their families demanded safety and oversight of workplaces, and legislators responded.

In pressing for prompt passage of workplace safety and health legislation, New Jersey Sen. Harrison Williams Jr. said, "The knowledge that the industrial accident situation is deteriorating, rather than improving, underscores the need for action now." He called attention to the need to protect workers against such hazards as noise, cotton dust, asbestos, falls, cutting tools and chemicals and fire. As larger and more complex infrastructure projects were under construction nationwide, attention to workers' safety became an urgent issue.

In the U.S. House of Representatives, Rep. William Steiger, a Republican from Wisconsin, worked for passage of a bill to protect workers. "In the last 25 years, more than 400,000 Americans were killed by work-related accidents and disease, and close to 50 million more suffered disabling injuries on the job. Not only has this resulted in incalculable pain and suffering for workers and their families, but

such injuries have cost billions of dollars in lost wages and production," Steiger said.

On Dec. 29, 1970, President Richard Nixon signed the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, also known as the Williams-Steiger Act, in honor of the two men who pressed so hard for its passage. Known initially as "the safety bill of rights," the OSH Act charged OSHA with assuring safe and healthy conditions for working men and women. From its earliest days, OSHA was a small agency with a big mission: health and safety for every single working person. When the agency opened for business in April 1971, it covered over 56 million workers at about 3.5 million workplaces.

OSHA published its first consensus standards on May 29, 1971. Some of those standards, including permissible exposure limits for more than 400 toxic substances, remain in effect today. Others have been updated or expanded through the agency's oversight or amended to clarify their intent, while some have been dropped as unnecessary or overly specific.

ABC leaders prioritized worker safety as nonnegotiable from the beginning, and they were influential in establishing new and evolving jobsite safety initiatives on the state and national levels. Initially, OSHA emphasized voluntary compliance with inspections, which



Site of the original ABC national headquarters in Washington, D.C.



1975 National Chair of the ABC Board of Directors Philip Abrams (far left) testified before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Labor-Management Relations about the controversial labor law reform bill.

was not nearly enough to ensure the safety of workers in millions of workplaces. Later, the agency adopted a "get tough" stance that evolved into a targeted approach based on significant hazards.

Likewise, in the decades to come, ABC would lead a zero-tolerance safety mindset that set the bar high for the entire industry—with construction owners and employers dedicated to preventing accidents before they occur.

INVESTING IN LEGISLATION

In an era of rapid social, political and economic change in the 1960s and 1970s, ABC grew its voice in government advocacy and policymaking as its membership grew.

ABC held its first legislative conference in Washington, D.C., in 1965, and the Beam Club—named for the final structural beam that signals completion and achievement of growth—was launched in 1966, recognizing and rewarding members who grow and promote the association by recruiting new members.

In 1968, ABC established its Washington legislative office, furthering its advocacy efforts and cementing its role as a national leader. The legislative office worked to influence public policy and legislation affecting the construction industry at the federal, state and local levels. It engaged with lawmakers and regulatory agencies to advocate for issues critical to merit shop contractors, including opposition to union-driven policies like project labor agreements, known as PLAs, and prevailing wage laws that could disadvantage nonunion contractors.

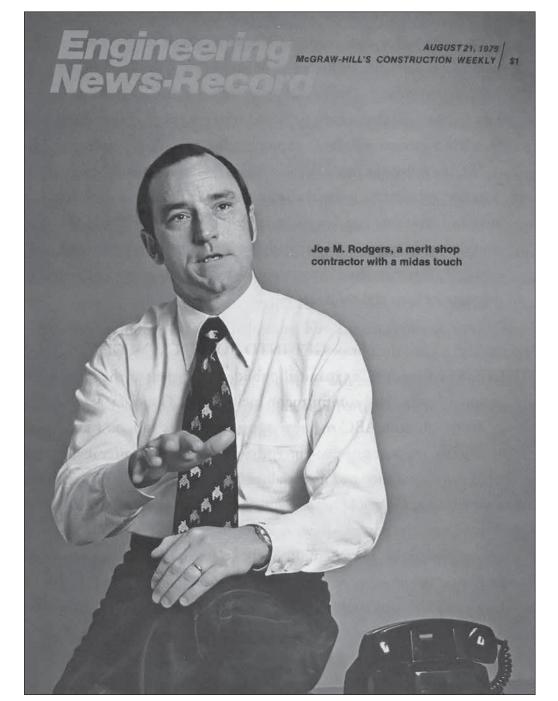
The opening of the legislative office was immediately effective and would become increasingly meaningful as the decades passed. Over many years, ABC's advocacy efforts have gone a long way to creating a more favorable environment for merit-based construction companies.

ABC's work in the federal arena has influenced crucial policies that have reduced regulatory burdens and streamlined safety compliance requirements. Also, ABC's efforts to work with regulators led to tax reform that continues to benefit small businesses and the construction industry. ABC-supported legislation such as the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act has contributed to lowering tax rates and simplifying the tax code for contractors.

ABC's advocacy efforts also shaped labor and employment laws. including opposing efforts to expand the joint-employer standard, which could increase liability for contractors. Decades later, during the COVID-19 pandemic, ABC lobbied for the inclusion of construction firms in federal relief programs like the Paycheck Protection Program to ensure businesses stayed solvent and that construction was deemed an essential industry in many states, allowing projects to continue for the benefit of citizens and the economy.

In 1971, ABC established the Merit Shop Foundation, which later became the Trimmer Construction Education Foundation, to develop a nationwide skilled workforce through apprenticeships, advocacy and research aligned with the merit shop philosophy. Additionally, the foundation prioritized scholarships and industry promotion, aiming to enhance perceptions of the construction industry as a whole. The overarching goal was to demonstrate the values and impact of meritbased practices.

By 1975, ABC had expanded to 46 chapters, with 9,172 members. What started when seven men joined forces to change an industry was well on its way to transforming how we build America. Twenty-five years after its founders stood up to union overreach, ABC's early efforts and victories were bearing fruit.



The cover of the Aug. 21, 1975, issue of "Engineering News-Record," featured Joe M. Rodgers, 1976 Chair of the ABC National Board of Directors, and founder, owner and CEO of J.M. Rodgers & Associates in Nashville, Tennessee.



Michael Callas, a life-long director of the local Cumberland Valley chapter, also served as its president in 1968. Callas was the 1973-1974 Chair of the ABC National Board of Directors and member of the Board until his death in 2004.



1975-2000



CHAPTER 2

BUILDING THE MODERN WORLD

The last quarter of the 20th century was a complicated time for American labor relations. For members of ABC who embraced the principles of the merit shop, the threats were considerable. The landscape for contractors was fraught and, unlike the previous few decades, the added pressure of economic uncertainty prevailed.

Throughout periods of recession, many construction projects were delayed or canceled, as fewer ambitious projects were possible with such stiff financial headwinds. In 1982, the unemployment rate for construction workers grew to a painful 16.5%, which was double the jobless rate for all industries combined. This was the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, and builders and contractors felt it more than just about anyone else.

The recession in the early 1980s led to double-digit inflation, with interest rates nearing 20%. Making matters worse, Congress reduced spending on infrastructure. The high costs of construction materials plus inflation, with the added challenge of stricter building codes, made it more cost-effective to modernize and retrofit existing buildings instead of constructing new ones. By the end of the 1980s, more money was spent on remodeling than on new construction.

All told, the 1980s were not kind to the construction industry. For ABC, however, it was a time of remarkable, industry-changing impact and innovation. For example, heavy equipment became more compact, quieter and safer. The concept of "smart" buildings was just emerging, setting the stage for technologies that create more efficiency in heating, cooling, lighting and security.

As the values of freedom and inclusion of the merit shop spread, ABC's straightforward philosophy was attracting more and more

members nationwide. After World War II, nearly all construction work was performed by unionized workers. But union membership among construction workers dropped below 50% by 1965. In the 1980s and 1990s, the tables turned, and the merit shop became the new standard for the entire construction industry. ABC membership grew from 1,000 members in the 1960s, to 3,000 members in 1970, to about 15,000 members by 1980.

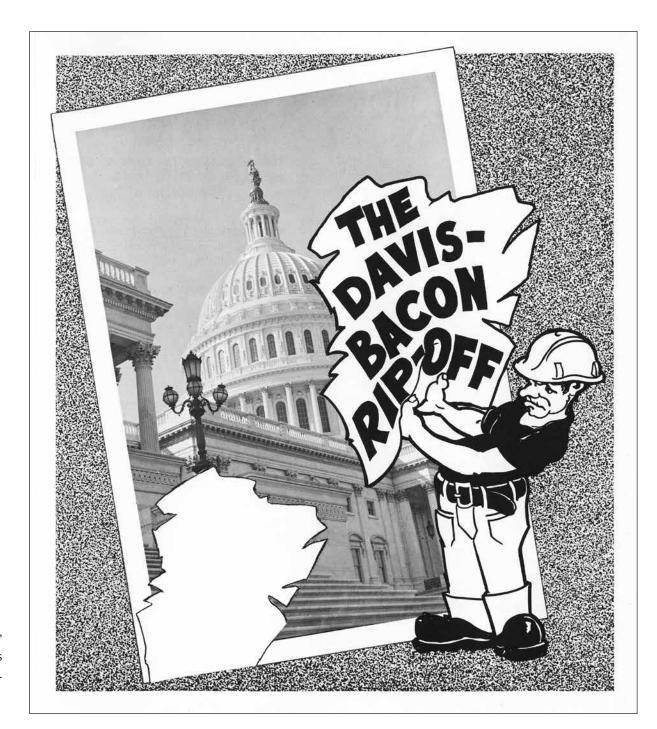
While union aggression continued, ABC members stayed focused on freedom in the workplace and doubled down on their commitment to safety, workforce development and building industry relationships across disciplines.

As America's largest infrastructure project—the Interstate Highway System—remained under construction until 1992, other massive initiatives were also under way. Megaprojects—initiatives costing over \$1 billion and making substantial impacts on communities—were planned and built across the country, even though economic challenges slowed growth to a crawl.

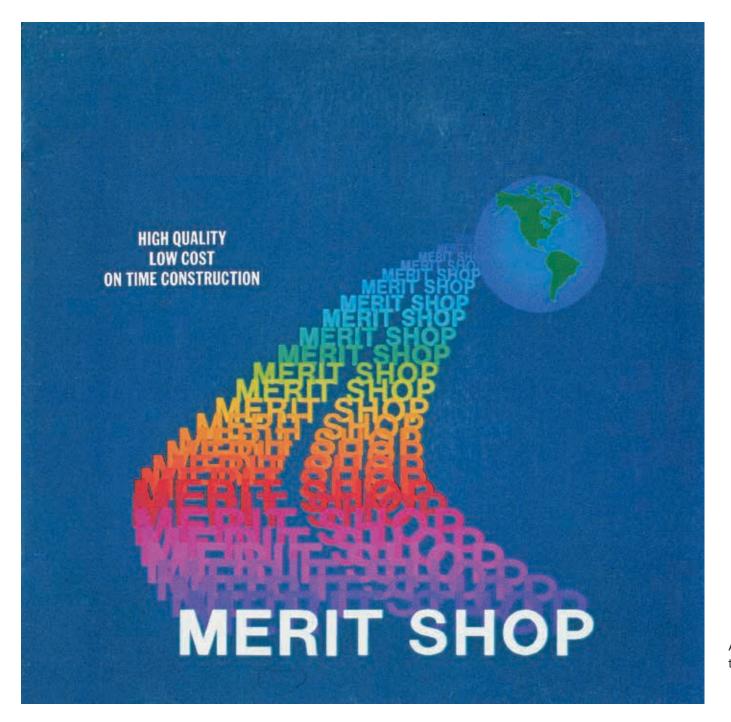
AN ERA OF OIL AND GAS EXPANSION BRINGS SAFETY OVERHAULS

OPEC's oil embargo following the 1973 war in the Middle East resulted in a worldwide recession and oil shortages, leading President Richard Nixon to announce "Project Independence" to promote domestic energy production. Calling it "the strength of self-sufficiency," Nixon aimed to unite the country to change how energy was developed and used, and spur growth despite energy shortages.

Left: Florida unions protest the 1984 ABC national convention in Miami.



"The Davis-Bacon Rip-Off" pamphlet detailing problems with the Davis-Bacon Act.



A 1983 ABC booklet on the merit shop ideology.



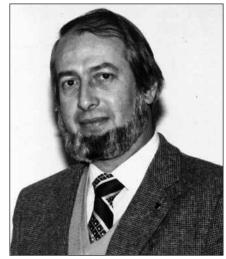
1975 **Philip Abrams** Abreen Corp. Needham Heights, Massachusetts **General Contractor**



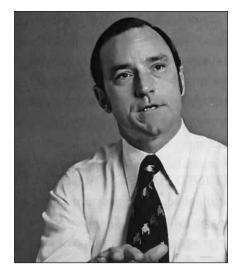
1977 **Gerald Oliver Zimmerman Construction** Traverse City, Michigan **General Contractor**



1979 **Robert Turner Paisan Construction** Houston **General Contractor**



1981 Franz June **Gulf States Inc.** Freeport, Texas **Industrial Contractor**



1976 Joe M. Rodgers Joe M. Rodgers & Associates Nashville, Tennessee **General Contractor**



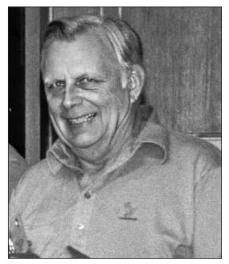
1978 Joseph Burton **Hocks Contractors Baltimore General Contractor**



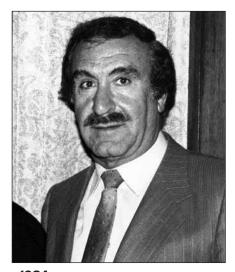
1980 **Ted Kennedy** BE&K Birmingham, Alabama **Industrial Contractor**



1982 John Fielder **South Coast Electric** Santa Ana, California **Electrical Contractor**



1983 **Ed Frohling Mountain States Mineral** Tucson, Arizona **Mining Contractor**



1984 Pat Alibrandi Interstate Electrical **Burlington, Massachusetts Electrical Contractor**

ICONIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In the decades since the founding of ABC, merit shop contractors have built bridges, tunnels, railways, hospitals, air and seaports, oil and natural gas extraction projects, aerospace and weapons systems, factories, stadiums and educational institutions—all of which have been used by billions of people.

Thousands of ABC-led projects transformed our landscape and built the places where we live, work, play, heal and pray.

Among the many projects ABC members have built are:

Air Force Center for Environmental Excellence Headquarters in San Antonio

Aircraft Rescue and Firefighters Training Facility in Dallas, Texas

Amway Catalogue Distribution Center in Ada, Michigan

The Ballpark (now Globe Life Park) in Arlington, Texas

Bristol Regional Medical Center in Tennessee

BMW Energy Center in Greer in South Carolina

Coors Field Stadium in Denver, Colorado

Country Lane Elementary School in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma

Dallas Convention Center

ElevateCOS Airport Terminal Modernization in Colorado Springs, Colorado

Episcopal Conference Center in Robert, Louisiana

Exxon Chemical Halobutyl Reactor Replacement Project in Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Georgia Gulf PVC Expansion Project in Plaquemine, Louisiana

Henderson Water Reclamation Facility in Nevada

Howard Hughes Medical Institute in Bethesda, Maryland

Hughes Missile Systems Project in Tucson, Arizona

Icefloe Cogeneration Power Project in Escondido, California

Kuahua Peninsula Intermediate Submarine Maintenance Facility in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii

Library of Congress in Washington

Old Post Office in Dayton, Ohio

Pennsylvania Railroad System in Strasburg, Pennsylvania

Restoration of the Texas State Capitol in Austin, Texas

United Airlines Hangar in Indianapolis

Veterans Affairs Medical Center Replacement Hospital in Dallas, Texas

Washoe County Courts Complex in Reno, Nevada



The Marathon refinery in Garyville, Louisiana, in 1977.

Reassessing dependence on Middle Eastern oil created tremendous opportunity for the heavy industrial construction sector, creating critical jobs in oil extraction, production and distribution. ABC members helped to build America's refineries and created a long legacy of merit shop participation in Gulf Coast economic growth.

The Marathon refinery in Garyville, Louisiana, came online in 1977. It's considered the last major refinery built in the United States. An oil glut in the 1980s was followed by a period of consolidation in the petrochemical industry in the 1990s as vehicles became more efficient, and the industry saw several refinery mergers and acquisitions.

The number of refineries decreased from 319 in 1980 to 205 in 1990, according to American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers, and the refineries that survived continued to invest in complex and sophisticated processing capabilities.

From 1988 to 2018, U.S. refiners invested \$185 billion to make their facilities among the most efficient and complex in the world, AFPM states.

A tragedy in the burgeoning Gulf Coast region put industrial worker safety protocols under the federal government's magnifying glass. On Oct. 23, 1989, a series of deadly explosions occurred at the Phillips Petroleum Co.'s Houston Chemical Complex in Pasadena, Texas. The initial blast was so powerful that it registered 3.5 on the Richter scale, leading to fires that required 10 hours to bring under control. Twenty-three people were killed and 314 were injured, and an investigation revealed that the accident was caused by the expelling of extremely flammable gases released during regular maintenance of the plant's polyethylene reactors.

The aftermath of the explosion led to increased scrutiny of industrial safety practices and influenced the creation of OSHA's Process Safety Management standard in 1992. This regulation aimed to enhance safety in handling hazardous chemicals and set stricter requirements for contractors and companies working in high-risk environments.

The accident was among the worst industrial workplace accidents in the United States since World War II and, for ABC, it was a call to action. The mandate to make safety a priority, and ensure access to training, led the organization to deepen its commitment to safe workplaces.

ABC—and others in the construction industry—learned significant safety and operational lessons from this deadly disaster. The accident highlighted the need for comprehensive hazard evaluations to identify and mitigate risks in high-stakes industrial operations. Because inadequate maintenance and permitting systems contributed to the explosion, the industry learned to prioritize stricter controls and more aggressive procedures for maintenance work, especially in such hazardous environments.

A failure in isolating equipment safely in the minutes and hours after the disaster underscored the importance of having rigorously enforced lockout and tagout systems to prevent the accidental release of energy or materials capable of such destruction. Understanding what went wrong revealed the lack of effective gas detection and alarms, prompting improvements in these systems. Lastly, this horrific accident led to innovative plant design and stronger safety features.

The nation's crucial petrochemical plants continue to undergo a complex series of expansions, upgrades and turnarounds, requiring top-skilled specialty contractors to work cooperatively with project owners and global stakeholders.

In addition, the petrochemical industry drives the need for development of intermodal transportation—air, rail, cargo shipping and storage—combined with the need for improvements to the energy grid. In fact, the United States today produces 16% of the world's energy and employs 8.5 million people in the energy industry.

LEADING THE CHARGE: ABC TRANSFORMS SAFETY IN CONSTRUCTION

Safety is responsible business and it's good for business. For ABC members, a safety mindset drives attitude, action and accountability on jobsites and reduces operating costs for the benefit of all project stakeholders.

In the mid-1980s, ABC was uniquely positioned to transform the construction industry through safety education. Its leaders introduced

STEP Participants Continue To Outperform Industry Average in Jobsite Incident Rates



STEP helps members improve health and safety performance.

the Safety Training and Evaluation Process, then known as STEP, developed by and for contractors to help measure and improve safety programs on construction projects of every scale across the country. Now known as the STEP Health and Safety Management System, STEP has directly reduced jobsite incident rates by helping participants develop, implement and enhance their safety programs,

enabling workers to take control of their own well-being at work. With STEP, workers became an integral part of the safety protocols that ensure they went home unharmed every day.

Improving health and safety best practices at such a high level and across the board was nothing short of a quantum leap forward for millions of people working in construction.



Training curricula from ABC's Wheels of Learning program.

As STEP took hold in the industry, a paradigm shift occurred, reversing expectations from "incidents will happen" to "incidents are preventable." This new way of thinking became a conviction that zero-incident construction projects are possible. ABC members began using the benchmarking tool to build a culture of safety that permeated their business cultures.

Put simply: STEP isn't just a safety evaluation; it provides a roadmap to industry-leading health and safety performance by emphasizing leading indicators like employee participation, management commitment, pre-incident planning and effective communication, rather than relying only on lagging indicators like incident rates. It is an offensive strategy, rather than a defensive strategy, that keeps everyone involved in accountability for safety.

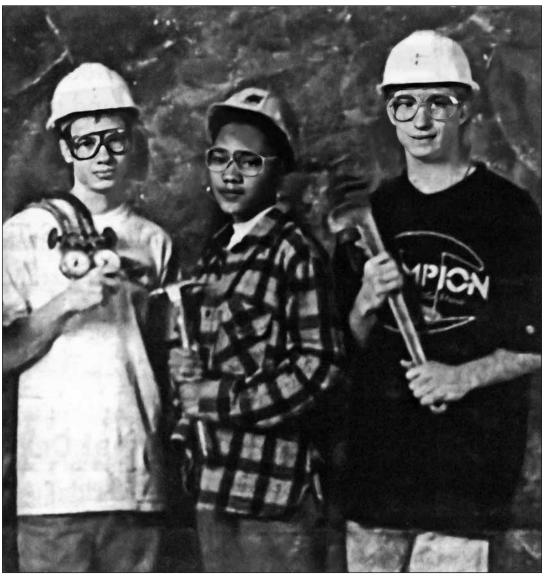
The simplicity of STEP is its scalability, making it an easy-to-implement tool for businesses of any size, whether they manage three workers or thousands. Unlike previous safety initiatives in construction, STEP isn't just an internal tool used by ABC members to give the appearance of promoting health and safety. It offers solid metrics that hold companies truly accountable for worker safety. It signals to the rest of the industry where changes and improvements are required, delivering on ABC's commitment to transparency for workers and clients.

Companies grow when health and safety are at the core of what they build. Safer businesses not only attract the best workers because they vie to work at companies with the best reputations, but they also win bigger and more lucrative projects across different regions of the country and industries, in addition to government contracts.

From every perspective, more safety means more wins, for workers, their employers and the industry.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER: TRAINING CRAFT PROFESSIONALS FOR SUCCESS

ABC's workforce development initiatives reflect the organization's commitment to people, and a core component of why the organization was formed: Sharing knowledge and expertise makes all construction companies stronger. It's what merit means: being worthy and, therefore, deserving of opportunity. Skilled, safe and



The November 1995 issue of the ABC magazine "ABC Contractor" featured students that attended NCCER's school-to-work program at Western Technical High School in Baltimore County, Maryland.

responsible construction professionals make the entire industry stronger and give employers and workers a unified voice in construction.

Teamwork, communication, training, upskilling, information-sharing, compliance, effectiveness and, above all, safety, are foundational to ABC's approach.

In the 1980s, hiring qualified, committed workers was as critical of an issue for construction companies nationwide as it is today. Contractors realized that their ability to train others would keep them competitive and profitable. So, building on the success of STEP, ABC created what it needed: education aimed at meeting the critical skilled labor crunch that was growing day by day.

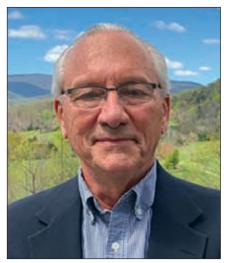
During the 1970s and 1980s, ABC embarked on a campaign to create a nationwide training and skills-building network, opening chapters across the country and garnering headlines in the process. In cooperation with AmeriCorps, the organization developed Wheels of Learning to provide coordinated, skills-based education.

What ABC brought to the table through the new Wheels of Learning Foundation eliminated redundancy among many companies across many different trades. And instead of member companies conducting individualized training, which costs a company a lot of money and time, ABC pooled the industry's collective knowledge.

The program built a curriculum for a wide range of craft specialties that would underpin future programs offered by the National Center for Construction Education and Research (now NCCER) and through ABC chapters nationwide. Success in the program was competency-based, ensuring that learners achieve the necessary skills before advancing, and it offered apprenticeships as well as classroom instruction. This merged on-the-job training out in the complex world of construction with expertise inside the classroom, creating a well-rounded opportunity.



1981 Chair of the ABC National Board of Directors Franz June, second from the left, explains the Wheels of Learning training program to Labor Secretary Raymond Donovan. Former Chair of the ABC National Board of Directors Ted Kennedy, far right, looks on.



1985
Bill Gentry
Chantilly Construction
Chantilly, Virginia
General Contractor



1986
Jean Hails
Hails Construction
Roswell, Georgia
General Contractor



1987 Johnny Jones Stanley Jones Corp. South Fulton, Tennessee General Contractor

Students of Wheels of Learning got the best of both sides of their education: the classroom and jobsite. Upon successful completion, participants received portable, industry-recognized credentials that told employers that these skilled workers were ready to contribute, boost the success of projects and add value to construction businesses.

The curriculum equipped participants with the technical and practical skills needed to excel in their careers, transfer their knowledge to future generations, and keep the industry growing, evolving and adapting to change. It also integrated emerging technologies and construction methods, bringing innovation to students and delivering economic benefits to employers.

The program also helped with public perception, encouraging young people to learn what ABC members already know: A career in construction can be deeply rewarding and lucrative, and provide a lifetime of community. It elevated working in construction as a source of pride. This was an extension of ABC's purpose, memorialized in

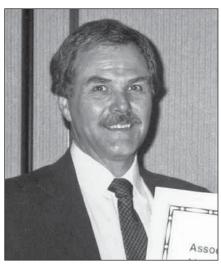
Article III of its bylaws: "Promote and encourage continuing education, apprenticeship and other training programs for management and the crafts within the construction industry."

In 1991, ABC's Construction Education Foundation, with the support of 11 member companies, further standardized the curricula with its first industry-recognized credentials: electrical, pipefitting, millwright, welding and instrumentation. In 1993, 53 organizations applied for ABC's master trainer and instructor certification programs. Then in 1994, these members each pledged \$1 million in contributions to help raise the profile of ABC's educational programs:

- · Austin Industrial, Houston
- BE&K, Birmingham, Alabama
- Becon Construction, Houston
- Brown & Root, Houston
- · Fluor Daniel, Greenville, South Carolina
- KCI Constructors, Houston
- Metric Constructors, Houston



1988 Mike Perkins **Perkins Construction** Dayton, Ohio **General Contractor**



1989 Robert L. Turner R.L. Turner Corp. Zionsville, Indiana **General Contractor**

- National Industrial Contractors, Birmingham, Alabama
- TIC The Industrial Co., Steamboat Springs, Colorado
- Yeargin, Birmingham, Alabama
- H.B. Zachry Co., San Antonio

In an act of selfless generosity toward the betterment of the entire construction industry, the ABC leaders chose to transition the Wheels of Learning program into a separate educational entity that would expand to serve both union and nonunion workers. In 1996, NCCER officially became a not-for-profit education foundation, developing curricula for over 40 craft areas.

In the early 2000s, NCCER established several accredited training and education facilities and rebranded its product line as the Contren Learning Series, which is now completely online as the NCCER Testing System. In 2011, it opened a new headquarters in Alachua, Florida, and created a full recruitment and image enhancement initiative known as Build Your Future, which continues to award scholarships through ABC and its chapters.

The importance of educating the next generation of builders, craft professionals and young professionals is paramount for the industry to continue to deliver the infrastructure needs of the United States. ABC estimates that the U.S. construction industry is short hundreds of thousands of workers every year.

This is the result of several challenges: difficulty attracting and retaining young workers, people turning away from vocational education, a retiring workforce and fear of the dangers of working in construction.

Today, ABC is the leader in apprenticeship and craft training in the merit shop construction industry, with more than 1,100 entry points into the industry. This distinction has allowed ABC to work closely with NCCER in the development, revision and publication of cutting-edge curriculum. Additionally, ABC provides 450 formal apprenticeship training programs nationwide that are registered with the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship and state equivalents.



Students from Florida International University compete at the Construction Management Competition at ABC Convention 2025.

ABC's 67 chapters and their affiliates offer 800 apprenticeship, craft, safety and construction management education programs—including 450 government-registered apprenticeship programs—across the country. The National Student Chapter Network, which connects local ABC chapters to colleges and universities with construction management degree programs, grew to 60 in 2024 with two new chapters: Minnesota State University, Mankato, affiliated with ABC Minnesota/North Dakota, and Oregon State University, Corvallis, affiliated with ABC Pacific Northwest.

The certifications and skills obtained through ABC's current workforce development programs are recognized internationally, creating portable skills that allow workers to pursue opportunities across regions without needing to requalify. This contributes to creating a larger, more flexible and mobile workforce in an industry in desperate need of more skilled workers. These credentials also support meritbased employment, and ABC's foundational mission: opportunities based on skill and performance, rather than union membership.

According to ABC's 2024 Workforce Development Survey, member contractors currently invest \$1.6 billion to provide craft, leadership and health and safety education to more than 1.3 million course attendees nationwide. Safety education accounts for the greatest share of total workforce investment at 59%.

ABC member contractors not only build and rebuild structures with excellence, but they also help build lifelong, durable, transferable skill sets for their employees by investing billions to cultivate their career progression in commercial and industrial construction.

More than a pathway to career advancement—in which students can easily transition from apprentice to journey-level worker and



Jean Hails, first female Chair of the ABC National Board of Directors, met with President Ronald Reagan at the White House.

leadership roles—this investment does what the merit shop did in 1950: elevate the perception of the industry and attract more talent. High-quality training, accessible to all workers, levels the playing field, much as the merit shop had done, decades earlier.

WELCOMING STUDENTS INTO THE FOLD

In 1975, ABC introduced its student chapters program. The initiative was established to engage the next generation of construction professionals by fostering relationships among students, educational institutions and the construction industry. Through these chapters, students gain access to mentorship, industry knowledge and networking opportunities, helping to prepare them for careers in construction management. Connecting local ABC chapters to colleges and universities with construction-related degree programs helps to build the construction management pipeline and mentor future leaders of the construction industry.

At the local level, ABC chapters facilitate the interaction of ABC member firms with student chapters through a variety of industry association and school events, including regular membership meetings, guest speakers, internships, community service projects, fundraisers, career fairs and events, jobsite tours and other activities.

As a member of an ABC student chapter, students are given the opportunity to learn about the construction industry while learning about the importance of the merit shop philosophy and free enterprise. Involvement in a student chapter provides interaction with ABC national and chapter staff, member contractors, faculty and staff, and students with similar interests and career goals.



1990 John Chapin Willmar Electric Willmar, Minnesota Electrical Contractor



1992 Steve Westra Westra Construction Waupun, Wisconsin General Contractor



1994 Leo Anhalt SSI Inc. Fort Smith, Arkansas Metal Building Contractor



1996
Gary Hess
Hess Mechanical
Upper Marlboro, Maryland
Mechanical Contractor



1991
John Smith
Lake Mechanical
Eustis, Florida
Mechanical Contractor



1993
Joe Ivey
Ivey Mechanical
Kosciusko, Mississippi
Mechanical Contractor



1995
Gary Vos
Dan Vos Construction
Ada, Michigan
General Contractor



1997
John Jennings
Jack Jennings & Sons
Orlando, Florida
General Contractor



1998 **Ben Houston TDIndustries Dallas Mechanical Contractor**



1999 David M. Bush Adena Corp. Mansfield, Ohio **General Contractor**

ABC ENCOURAGES OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

In the 1980s, the number of women employed in construction fields was significantly smaller than today's demographics. Lack of awareness about opportunities in the skilled trades, inadequate access to training programs and the perception that construction is a male-dominated industry kept many women from pursuing careers in construction.

In 1985, women represented only about 5% of the construction workforce in the United States. This small percentage reflected the barriers women faced in entering and advancing within the industry. Over time, efforts were made to attract more talent, but significant gender gaps persisted. ABC sought to address this disparity and further strengthened the merit shop philosophy by inviting the best talent in the field, a core tenet of its purpose and goals, outlined in Articles I and III of its bylaws.

The merit shop philosophy maintains that career opportunities across the United States should be created and made available to all people. In the bylaws of the organization, Article I - The Principles of the Merit Shop reads: "We believe legislation that embraces fair play for both employer and employee is essential to the preservation of our free enterprise system. The law should protect the right of employees to work regardless of race, color, creed, age, sex, national origin, membership or non-membership in a labor organization or other protected class."

Slowly, more women entered construction trades and leadership roles and, by 2000, nearly 1 million women had entered the industry. representing about 9% of the total workforce. The number of women in construction had doubled in just a few years.

Multiple perspectives, improved communication and enhanced problem-solving are the hallmarks of thriving teams. Construction employers that are devoted to recruitment and retention programs typically attract the most motivated, talented workers. They also have a competitive advantage in displaying higher innovation, jobsite productivity and performance.

Creating generations of female role models in construction had the effect of bringing more women to the field, enabling students to see productive and lucrative futures for themselves. In 1986, Jean Hails became the first woman elected to lead ABC's National Board of Directors.

Throughout recent decades, Wheels of Learning, the NCCER curriculum and ABC's commitment in its bylaws to "the betterment of the individual, the industry and the nation ... concern for the general welfare of the employee ... fair compensation for work performed. ... [and] sound legislation in the areas of workers' compensation, safety and unemployment compensation" have encouraged more and more individuals, from all walks of life, to envision themselves on jobsites and in leadership roles.

THE INDUSTRY NOTICED: **ABC'S CONTRIBUTIONS RECOGNIZED**

In 1988, ABC received the first Business Roundtable Construction Industry Safety Excellence Award, called CISE, which included a \$50,000



Chair of the ABC National Board of Directors David M. Bush spoke in front of the Capitol during the 1999 ABC Legislative Conference.

grant that ABC used to further develop programs that improve jobsite safety. This prestigious award was presented by the Construction Users Roundtable, an organization of construction and engineering users committed to improving construction industry practices.

The CISE Award honors companies, projects and teams in the construction industry that demonstrate exemplary commitment to safety excellence. It highlights innovation, leadership and measurable results in safety management practices. Winners are chosen based on their ability to exceed industry standards, for their commitment to continuous improvement and for modeling best practices for others in the construction sector.

The decade ended with yet more recognition for ABC, as the organization partnered with the Federal Emergency Management Agency on the Project Impact program to help communities withstand damage from natural disasters.

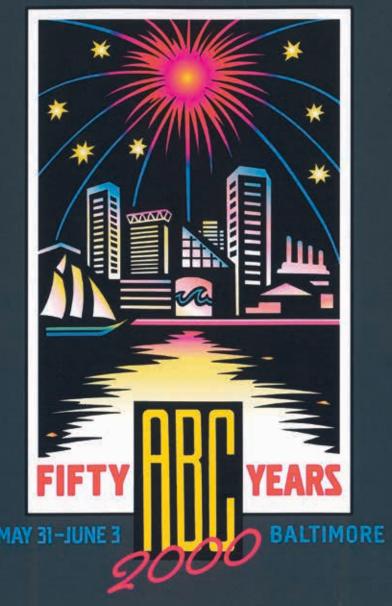
In 1999, Fortune magazine named ABC one of the top 50 most influential organizations in the country. Fifty years after seven brave contractors joined forces in Maryland, the organization's impact on the construction industry was indisputable.

Throughout recent decades, Wheels of Learning, the NCCER curriculum and ABC's commitment in its bylaws to "the betterment of the individual, the industry and the nation ... concern for the general welfare of the employee ... fair compensation for work performed ... [and] sound legislation in the areas of workers' compensation, safety and unemployment compensation" have encouraged more and more individuals, from all walks of life, to envision themselves on jobsites and in leadership roles.



2000-2025

NATIONAL CONVENTION



CHAPTER 3

GROWTH IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

In 2000, at the turn of the century, 81.7% of construction workers did not belong to a union, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

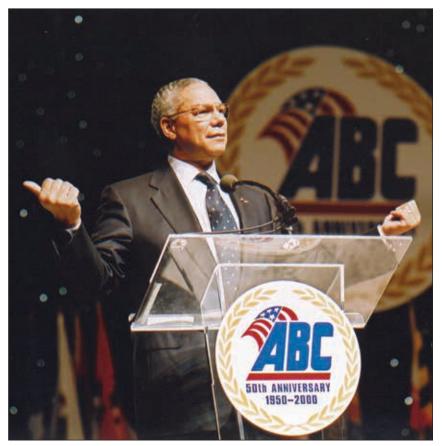
By 2024, a record 89.7% of the U.S. construction industry workforce was nonunion—upward of 8 million workers, signifying a massive shift for an industry that had an 85% unionization rate in 1950. There had never been a smaller percentage of union members in the construction industry.

Wages also rose. Personal income in right-to-work states (states with laws that prohibit workers from being forced to join a union as a condition of employment) rose by 39% between 2001 and 2016, compared to only 26% in non-right-to-work states. Workers in these states also saved money on union dues, which are often used to support political and lobbying activities on behalf of organized labor.

ABC's investments in apprenticeship, workforce development, health, safety and leadership education had provided the right tools to serve the nation's construction workforce, and the association had created generations of experts who build the places Americans live, gather, heal, play and learn. Five decades after seven contractors came together to change the industry, ABC's industry-leading practices raised the bar for all builders.

ABC PROVIDES LEADERSHIP IN UNPRECEDENTED TIMES

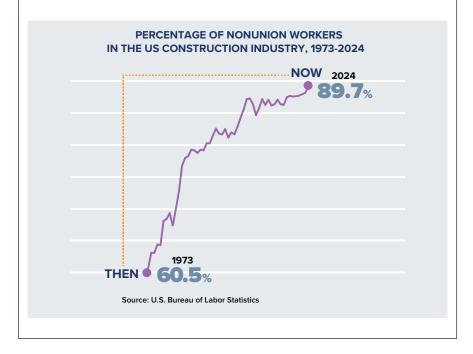
It's not hyperbole to say that the events of Sept. 11, 2001, changed the world as we knew it, and ABC and the construction industry

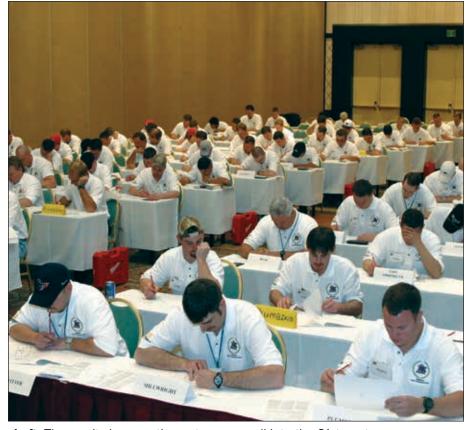


Colin Powell spoke at the ABC national convention in Baltimore in 2000.

Merit Shop Construction Workforce Continues to Grow in 2024

Nonunion workers comprise 89.7% of the U.S. construction industry, an all-time high, up from 89.3% in 2023.





Left: The merit shop continues to grow well into the 21st century.

Above: National Craft Championships competitors take

the written exam at ABC Convention 2003.

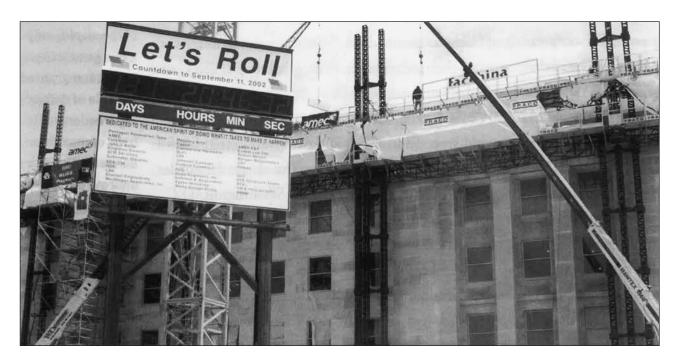
stepped in to provide support, leadership and expertise in America's darkest hours.

In just 102 minutes, the country shifted from peacetime to an assault by enemies intent on striking at American symbols of commerce and security. Flights 11 and 175 destroyed the Twin Towers, and Flight 93 crashed near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Flight 77 was crashed into the Pentagon, taking the lives of 184 people,

and sending the United States into a declared state of emergency that continues 25 years later.

When terrorists attacked the Pentagon, a massive renovation effort was already underway to bring the 60-year-old building up to date and into compliance with current building codes. ABC members were there that day, working to modernize the building.

The plane hit Wedge 1 of the five-sided building and the damage



Emergency repair and restoration was needed after the 9/11 attacks.

extended in both directions from the corner. The first phase of the structural reinforcement had been nearly completed prior to the attack, and those upgrades helped save lives.

The Pentagon is one of the world's largest, and arguably most important and carefully defended office buildings, encompassing nearly 6.5 million square feet. It's more than just the symbol of U.S. military strength and power, it's where some of the most globally significant decisions are made each day by the 30,000 military and civilian personnel who work within its walls. The attack on the Pentagon was the first significant attack on a federal facility since 1812.

Within minutes of the plane's impact, renovation team members were engaged in emergency response, disaster evaluation and recovery planning. The team gathered and reproduced structural drawings for the Federal Bureau of Investigation and disaster recovery teams, and provided personnel, equipment and materials for the rescue and recovery efforts.

ABC contractors got to work to rebuild and restore the headquarters of the U.S. Department of Defense. Within 24 hours, the renovation team had also prepared a damage assessment and a recovery strategy that were presented to the secretary of defense for approval. The Phoenix Project was born, with the goal of rebuilding the damaged sections of the Pentagon by Sept. 11, 2002. Over 1,000 workers were on site during peak construction, and their work enabled Pentagon employees to move back into the building on Aug. 15, 2002, ahead of schedule.

The collective knowledge and commitment of dozens of construction teams, engineers, designers, safety and technology experts came together, including many ABC member contractors, to make the impossible possible after the unthinkable changed the course of American history. Ten years after the Sept. 11 attacks, the entire renovation of the Pentagon, one of the largest and most complex construction projects in American history, was completed in June 2011.



Total human health was incorporated into STEP in 2023 to fully recognize all parts of a worker's health and safety.

ABC CONSIDERS MIND, BODY, HEART AND SOUL OF ITS WORKFORCE

For ABC, this new era led to the emergence of new initiatives. Building on the success of the STEP program, ABC introduced total human health, a supplement to its commitment to improving the overall health and well-being of all workers in construction. This initiative recognized that attention to workplace safety and health goes beyond physical safety to consider the body, mind, heart and soul.

Total human health takes a comprehensive, holistic approach and encourages employers to account for all aspects of well-being, adding mental, emotional and financial stability factors to safety best practices. Every part of human health is interconnected and interdependent, and ABC understood the need to address the high psychological demands of construction.

In 2023, total human health was incorporated into STEP, ensuring that all of ABC's health and safety initiatives work hand in hand to strengthen the individual and the industry. ABC broke new ground by making psychological safety a central focus of workforce development.

It's no secret that construction projects work on very tight deadlines, with no room for error or delay. As competition increases, the craft professionals, leaders, business owners and families of these workers feel enormous pressure to deliver work faster. Stress and exhaustion are the enemies of safety. By reducing the risks of chronic stress and anxiety both on and off the job and fostering healthier habits, construction employers are encouraging greater awareness of the costs of poor mental health.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, construction has the highest suicide rate of all industries. The rate of suicide among construction workers is 53.2 per 100,000



Since few studies had previously been conducted on the correlation between the use of measures companies and the number of incidents, accidents and injuries that occur, ABC created its Safety Performance Report to address this issue.

workers, compared with the national average of 17.3 per 100,000. This shocking number is five times greater than all other construction fatalities combined, each year.

The nature of the work-long hours, physical demands and the potential isolation of travel away from the stability of home and family—in combination with workforce demographics can all contribute to loneliness and reduced social support.

Destignatizing mental health challenges is no small feat, especially in an industry so historically defined by strength and the intensity of physical labor. By promoting access to resources for mental health support, as well as education about total human health, ABC is changing how businesses and workers think and talk about health and safety.

Being proactive and comprehensive about health pays dividends across the board for employers and workers: A healthier worker is a safer and more productive worker. Tackling issues like drug and



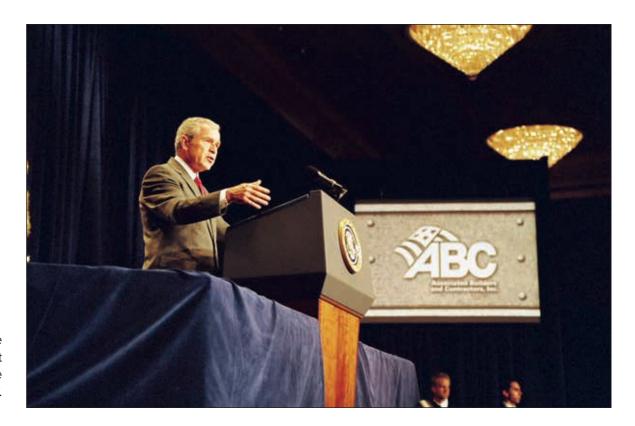
The Construction Coalition for a Drug- and Alcohol-Free Workplace was created to provide companies and organizations with the resources necessary to successfully implement an effective substance abuse policy.

alcohol use or treatment of anxiety and depression—which were historically overlooked in the industry—and developing tools for suicide prevention continue to benefit workers across the industry as well as their families.

ABC FIGHTS FOR FAIR AND OPEN COMPETITION ON TAXPAYER-FUNDED CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS. LEADS RIGHT-TO-WORK INITIATIVES

The election of President George W. Bush was celebrated by the merit shop contracting community, which was concerned about the growing threat of government-mandated project labor agreements resulting from the Clinton administration's pro-PLA policies.

Following a lengthy legal battle in the landmark Allbaugh case when construction labor unions unsuccessfully challenged President



President George W. Bush spoke at the ABC Legislative Conference in 2007.

George W. Bush's Executive Orders 13202 and 13208 prohibiting government-mandated PLAs on federal and federally assisted construction projects—ABC members were able to compete for \$147.1 billion worth of federal construction contracts and hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of federally assisted projects free from government-mandated PLAs until the orders were repealed by the Obama administration in 2009.

During the Obama administration, combating government-mandated PLAs on public construction projects became a renewed focus among ABC's local, state and federal advocacy leaders. When mandated, PLAs discourage quality contractors and the overwhelming majority of the nation's construction workers who are not union members—86.9% in 2010— from bidding and working on projects in their own communities, funded by their own tax dollars.

Anti-competitive and costly PLAs end open, fair and competitive bidding on public works projects, which is antithetical to the philosophy of the merit shop. By preventing certain local businesses from bidding on contracts to build roads, bridges, schools and other structures simply because they are unable to abide by the restrictions of a PLA, policymakers raise costs for taxpayers by 12% to 20%, according to widespread academic research.

In 2009, President Barack Obama signed Executive Order 13502, which eliminated the George W. Bush administration's pro-taxpayer policies and strongly encouraged, on a case-by-case basis, government-mandated PLAs on federal construction projects of \$25 million or more and permitted state and local governments to mandate PLAs.

In response, ABC launched an aggressive campaign against PLA mandates and preferences using a variety of public relations,



ABC Legislative Conference 2011 attendees visited the U.S. Capitol.

advocacy, legislative and litigation tactics that produced tremendous value for the merit shop contracting community.

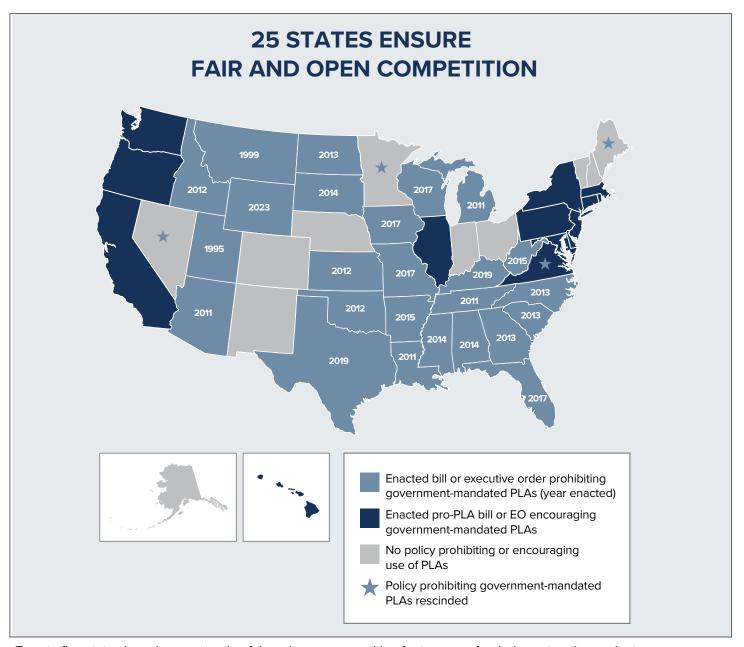
The Obama PLA policy resulted in just 12 PLA mandates on 3,222 federal construction projects of \$25 million or more from fiscal year 2009 to fiscal year 2023. ABC members won 52.2% of the \$238.45 billion worth of federal projects awarded during that time period based on merit.

In addition, in response to the Obama administration's pro-PLA policy, ABC spearheaded efforts to pass laws restricting government-mandated PLAs on public works projects in 26 states between 2010 and 2024, ensuring fair and open competition on more than a \$1 trillion worth of taxpayer-funded construction projects. Following the sunset and repeal of such measures following Democratic takeover of state governments, 25 states have Fair and Open Competition Act laws today.

The 2016 election of President Donald J. Trump led to a brief pause in the partisan White House PLA policy whiplash, as the Trump administration left the Obama policy in place, but did not mandate or advocate for the use of PLA mandates.

With the construction trade unions frustrated by the effective ABC-led campaigns for fair and open competition in government contracting, President Joe Biden intensified efforts to push PLA mandates and preferences on federal and federally assisted construction projects to fulfill his self-declared legacy to be the most pro-union president in history.

President Biden's February 2022 Executive Order 14063 required



Twenty-five states have laws protecting fair and open competition for taxpayer-funded construction projects.



ABC's Ben Brubeck testified before Congress against project labor agreement mandates in June 2024.

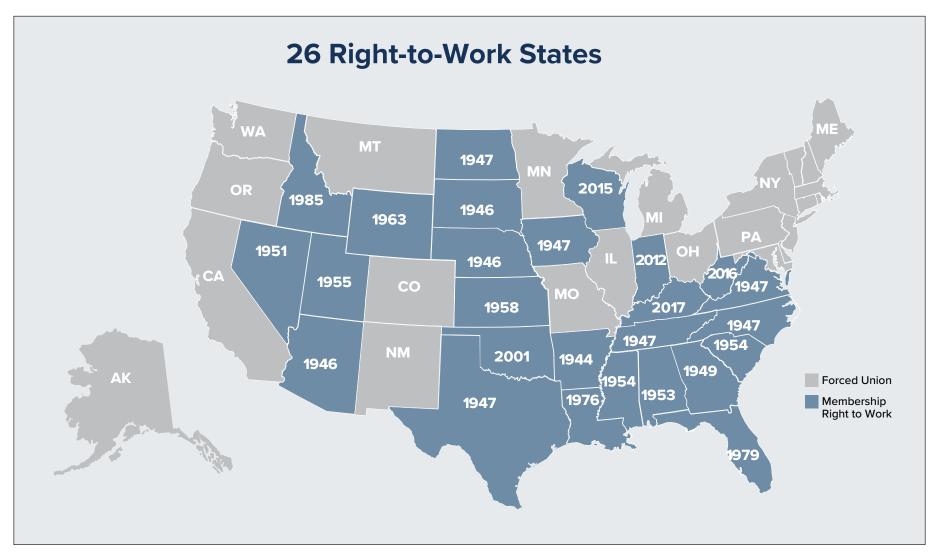
federal general contractors and subcontractors to enter into a PLA as a condition of winning a contract to perform services on federal construction projects worth \$35 million or more. The Biden administration also pushed PLAs on federally assisted construction projects receiving hundreds of billions of dollars of federal agency grant programs for infrastructure.

ABC continued to lead aggressive industry and coalition efforts against the Biden rule, which went into effect in January 2024. ABC filed a lawsuit against the PLA rule in federal court in Jacksonville, Florida, and supported successful federal contractor bid protests filed in a lawsuit in the U.S. Court of Federal Claims against PLAs mandated by federal agencies on 12 projects.

ABC has also led public relations and legislative efforts to enact a national FOCA law, which would ensure that merit-based

competition on taxpayer-funded construction projects by prohibiting PLA mandates and preferences on federal and federally assisted projects. In 2024, ABC and ABC members testified before the U.S. House Oversight and Accountability Committee to shed light on anti-competitive and inflationary pro-PLA policies that hurt the construction workforce.

ABC's work to communicate the dangers of PLA mandates have had far-reaching impact through political advocacy efforts and organizing the construction community. For example, when the Biden administration passed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021, ABC and the ABC-led BuildAmericaLocal.com coalition successfully advocated for win-win policies encouraging all contractors, regardless of union affiliation, to be allowed to compete to participate in new construction opportunities. ABC made clear to policymakers



Twenty-six states have passed right-to-work laws prohibiting employers from requiring workers to join unions as a condition of employment.

that the country can't rebuild our crumbling infrastructure, increase accountability and reduce waste under PLA mandates that restrict access for nonunion workers.

PLAs make construction more expensive compared to contracts delivered through fair and open competition. According to a 2022 survey, 99% of ABC members reported that they were less likely to bid on a taxpayer-funded construction contract if the bid specifications required the winning firm to sign a PLA with labor unions. Ninety-seven percent of ABC members said that government-mandated PLAs decrease economic efficiency in government contracting, making projects more costly to taxpayers.

The fight for merit-based competition in public works contracting is a foundation of ABC's advocacy efforts and will continue indefinitely, regardless of which party controls the White House, Congress and state and local governments.

THE PRO ACT RESTRICTS OPPORTUNITIES FOR MOST CONSTRUCTION PROFESSIONALS

Since 1943, dozens of states have passed right-to-work laws prohibiting employers from requiring workers to join unions as a condition of employment, incentivizing competition and creating a better environment for businesses and workers. From 2012 to 2017, ABC helped defend worker freedom by growing the number of right-towork-states from 22 to 27. Following Michigan's unfortunate 2024 repeal of its 2013 right-to-work law, the total number of right-to-work states now stands at 26.

In 2019 and again in 2021 and 2023, Democratic lawmakers in the U.S. House of Representatives introduced the Protecting the Right to Organize Act—called the PRO Act—aimed to amend previous labor laws for the purpose of permitting labor unions to encourage secondary strikes and weaken right-to-work laws.

The PRO Act is regressive, attempting to revise the Wagner, Taft-Hartley and Landrum-Griffin acts, which represent decades of hard-won victories over union aggression. Over 100 labor unions supported the PRO Act, while about 150 business groups opposed it, including ABC, stating that this regression hurts workers and businesses, opens the door to corruption and violates workers' right to freedom in the workplace.

ABC is leading the fight to defeat the PRO Act as a threat to the merit shop that discourages investment, harms businesses and limits worker freedom through extensive advocacy and lobbying efforts and public information campaigns to educate policymakers, workers, employers and the public. ABC has published op-eds, articles, fact sheets and performed extensive outreach to promote worker choice and freedom. ABC also works in coalitions with other business and industry groups not only to amplify opposition to the PRO Act, which was reintroduced in the 119th Congress, but also to support the Right to Work Act, which would prevent workers from being forced to pay union dues as a condition of employment.

The ABC-led Coalition for a Democratic Workplace has conducted studies to highlight the economic and legal implications of this pro-union legislation. The CDW has placed importance on informing lawmakers about the potential job losses and increased costs to



2000 W. Thomas Musser Tri M Corp. Kennett Square, Pennsylvania **Electrical Contractor**



2001 Henry G. Kelly **Austin Industrial** Houston **Industrial Contractor**



2002 Ken Adams **Pace Electric New Castle, Delaware Electrical Contractor**



2003 Edward L. Rispone **Industrial Specialty Contractors Baton Rouge, Louisiana Industrial Contractor**



2008 William D. Fairchild R. M. Murray Co. Manassas, Virginia **General Contractor**



2009 Jerry Gorski, P.E. Gorski Engineering Inc. Collegeville, Pennsylvania **General Contractor**



2010 James W. Elmer James W. Elmer Construction Co. Spokane, Washington **General Contractor**



2011 Mike Uremovich **Manhattan Mechanical Services LLC** Manhattan, Illinois **Mechanical Contractor**



2004 Carole L. Bionda Nova Group Inc. Napa, California **Industrial Contractor**



2005 **Gary Roden** AGUIRRECorp. **Dallas General Contractor**



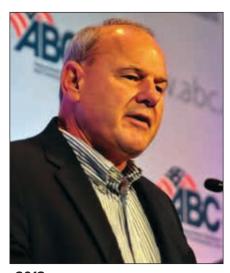
2006 Jack Darnall **Brasfield & Gorrie** Birmingham, Alabama **General Contractor**



2007 David R. Meyer The Meyer Cos. Inc. Lee's Summit, Missouri **General Contractor**



2012 **Eric Regelin Granix LLC Ellicott City, Maryland General Contractor**



2013 **Gregory Hoberock** hth cos. Union, Missouri **Industrial Contractor**



2014 Dan Brodbeck **Compass Partners LLC Brentwood, Tennessee Construction Management**



2015 Pamela Volm **Annapolis Contracting** Annapolis, Maryland **General Contractor**



During the 2023-2024 election cycle, ABC's Free Enterprise Alliance raised nearly \$6 million and invested over \$5 million in issue advocacy and, separately, get-outthe-vote campaigns promoting the values of the merit shop construction industry.

taxpayers emphasizing how this act runs counter to the interests of construction workers and employers who believe in merit-based advancement over union-imposed rules.

By leveraging ABC's significant advocacy efforts, the organization has worked to protect workers and employers from control over who can work, where, when and under what circumstances.

SERVING DURING THE PANDEMIC: ABC SPOKE FOR THE INDUSTRY

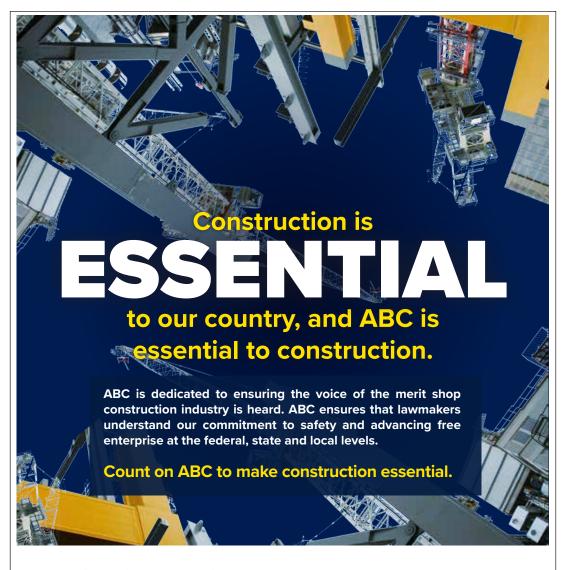
In 2020, ABC's guidance and leadership again played a significant role during another national disaster—the COVID-19 pandemic—which shut down nearly all industries and life as we knew it. As states shuttered businesses, sending millions of people home to wait, hope for good news and protect one another from the spread of the virus, ABC lobbied federal, state and local governments to designate construction as essential work. This allowed projects critical to infrastructure, health care and public safety to continue.

Consider what "critical to infrastructure" means in a complex economy with vast responsibilities to over 320 million people. Incapacitation of the transportation, utilities, energy systems, water, food, communications, health care, banking and finance sectors causes serious consequences for safety, security, the economy, public health and safety and, of course, national security.

This interconnected network of systems and assets is essential for daily life. In a time of unprecedented fear and uncertainty, this was a national moment that ABC was built for: offering leadership in how to keep moving forward and build safely when everything was on hold.

ABC adhered to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines to provide construction employers with resources and training on implementing health and safety protocols to protect workers from the virus. It was no small feat to create guidelines for social distancing on jobsites and ensure that the necessary personal protective equipment was available in a time when sanitation and PPE equipment was in extremely short supply.

ABC also stepped up to create guidance for employers during the



ABC—Helping members win work and deliver work safely, ethically and profitably for the betterment of the communities in which they work.



Visit abc.org to learn more.



ABC encouraged federal, state and local governments to designate construction as essential work during the COVID-19 pandemic.



2016
David Chapin
Willmar Electric Service
Lincoln, Nebraska
Electrical Contractor



2017 Chuck Goodrich Gaylor Electric Inc. Noblesville, Indiana Electrical Contractor



2018
George Nash
Branch & Associates Inc.
Herndon, Virginia
General Contractor

challenging early days of the pandemic, offering resources to help business owners navigate the exceptionally confusing workforce challenges that 2020 and 2021 presented. Furloughs, layoffs and unemployment affected all industries, but the construction industry was hit especially hard. As unemployment spiked, ABC educated its members on how to access programs like the Paycheck Protection Program and Small Business Administration loans and grants and provided the crucial support that people needed to stay afloat.

ABC monitored the economic impacts of the pandemic for the construction industry and shared data, forecasts, projections and strategies with members to help them navigate the challenges, supporting businesses and, of course, ensuring worker safety.

It cannot be overstated how valuable this support was. An estimated 68% of contractors saw a project canceled and, during this time, 48% saw a project halted mid-construction. The world's entire economy was put on life support, and thousands of projects were stopped because of a shortage of revenue from lenders, tight credit conditions, a lack of tax revenue for public works projects and a

retreat by investors who funded construction projects. With projects on pause, banks also saw an increase in defaults on construction loans.

Throwing another wrench into the works, many construction projects were paused or canceled because of uncertainty about the long-term economy, with no start date on the horizon. It was anyone's guess what the future of office and retail spaces would be. A construction supply chain disaster was at hand, as many construction materials were impossible to source. Construction became one of the hardest-hit industries in the United States.

COVID-19 had a lasting impact on construction, and the short but severe recession that followed kept the industry struggling to rebound. Hundreds of thousands of construction jobs remained unfilled in 2021 and beyond, making ABC's workforce development work strategies crucial to sustaining the industry.

A 40-year high in interest rates meant that, as the economy slowed, the cost of construction materials skyrocketed by more than 40%. According to ABC's analysis, many projects were indefinitely



ABC hosts tech events around the country, where members learn about prefabrication and modular construction, cybersecurity, jobsite safety. artificial intelligence and emerging construction technologies.

postponed—with the exception of crucial infrastructure—increasing competition for fewer projects that were moving forward and making them harder to land and more challenging to complete.

No one knew when things might return to normal, but ABC was ahead of the curve, finding new ways to lead in the downtime. The organization expanded online training and certification programs to help workers use their time effectively and continued to invest in attracting younger workers to join the future of the industry.

CONSTRUCTION TECHNOLOGY MOVES FAST FORWARD

Construction workers and leaders are a resilient bunch, though, and as the industry worked to return to pre-pandemic levels of employment, advances in technology helped to blunt the economic pain of the recession. While construction is truly one of humanity's oldest industries, the leaps and bounds of technological innovation and advancement made the early 21st century a time of unprecedented change. Technology has always played a leading role in the industry's

growth, but at no time more than in the years following the pandemic.

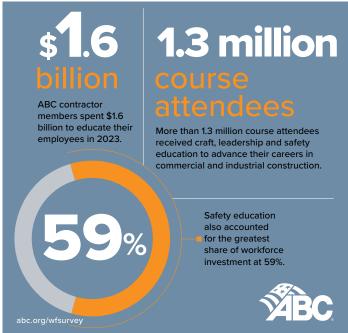
Construction had long been an industry where communication gaps and coordination challenges led to delays, cost overruns and inefficiencies. In the past, misaligned expectations between architects, engineers, project managers, subcontractors and clients often resulted in costly rework and disputes. However, the rapid advancement of technology has reshaped how stakeholders collaborate, making projects more transparent, efficient and streamlined.

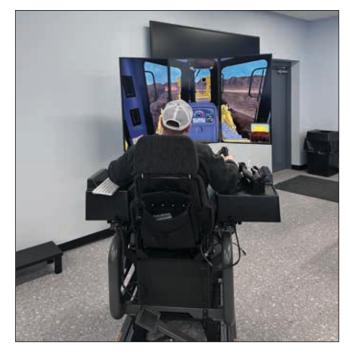
Technology has revolutionized the entire industry, and quickly, too, making every project more efficient, safer and more sustainable. In the mid-2000s, building information modeling—known as BIM—was first developed, allowing for 3D modeling and simulation, and making it easier for architects, engineers and contractors to collaborate more effectively by visualizing projects before ground is even broken.

The rise of digital project management tools in construction began gaining momentum in the early 2000s, but it saw a significant surge in adoption during the 2010s due to advancements in cloud computing, mobile technology and BIM. The impact of artificial



ABC's 2024 Tech Report focused on artificial intelligence to explain how the technology is used by stakeholders in the construction industry.





intelligence in construction began in the mid-2010s, gaining significant traction around 2017-2018 as companies started leveraging Al for automation, predictive analytics and safety monitoring. However, Al applications in construction accelerated even more during the 2020s, driven by advancements in machine learning, robotics and

ABC members

invest in building the construction workers of the future.

cloud-based Al solutions. Drones and surveying tools are now widely used, providing high-resolution aerial images for site surveys, progress tracking and cutting down timelines and costs associated with traditional surveying.

But perhaps most importantly, worker safety has seen remarkable leaps forward, as wearable technology like smart helmets, vests and glasses are now commonly used to monitor workers' health and safety. Workers receive alerts about fatigue, heat stress and proximity to dangerous equipment. Construction management is enhanced by Al-driven estimation tools, virtual robotics capable of laying bricks at scale, 3D printing and modular and prefabricated components that can be assembled on and off site.

ABC's 2024 Workforce Development Survey revealed the precise magnitude of the association's investments in education and

technology. ABC and its members invested \$1.6 billion to upskill 1.3 million course attendees craft, leadership and safety education. Safety education accounts for the greatest share of total investment at 59%. ABC contractors invested an average of 7.5% of payroll on workforce development, while trade and specialty contractors doubled their share of investment, according to the survey.

The Trimmer Construction Education Fund, named for John Trimmer, ABC's first executive vice president, continues to support local chapter investment in technology and innovation. Starting in 2016, TCEF began investing in helping chapters across America transition from traditional classrooms to virtual education options, attracting more individuals to seek out a lucrative career in construction.

In 2024 alone, ABC members contributed more than \$520,000 to the fund, which awarded grants to the Empire State (pictured above), Metro Washington, Northern California, Southern California and Western Washington chapters—only a short list of the regions benefitting from the program. TCEF also contributes to the ACE Mentor Program, suicide prevention training, virtual reality simulators, the



Texas State University was named the student chapter of the year in 2019.



Gold medals awarded to top craft professionals at the 2014 National Craft Championships.

Construction Management Competition and the National Craft Championships.

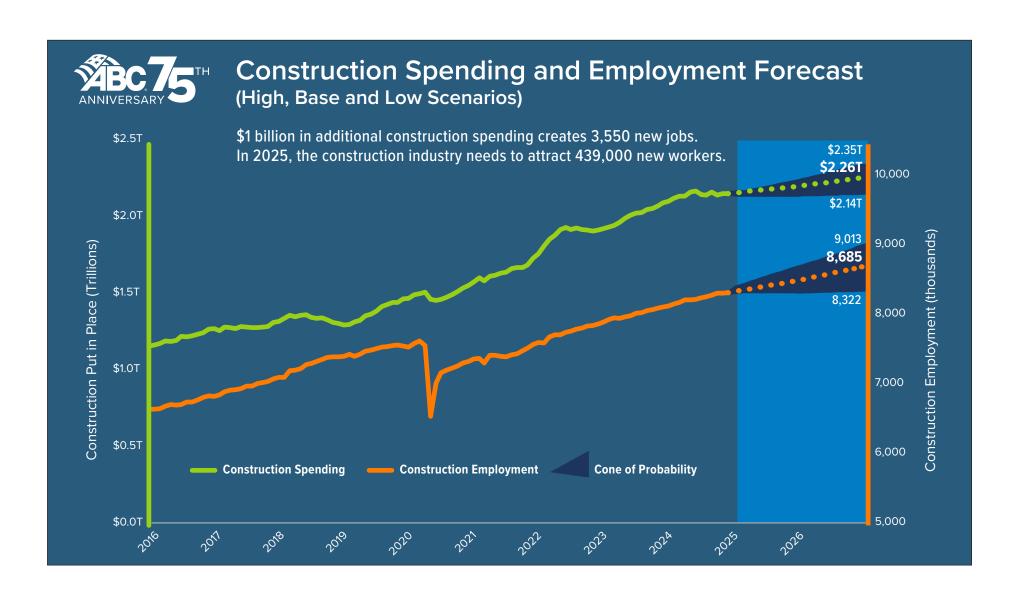
What a difference just a few decades have made for the entire construction industry.

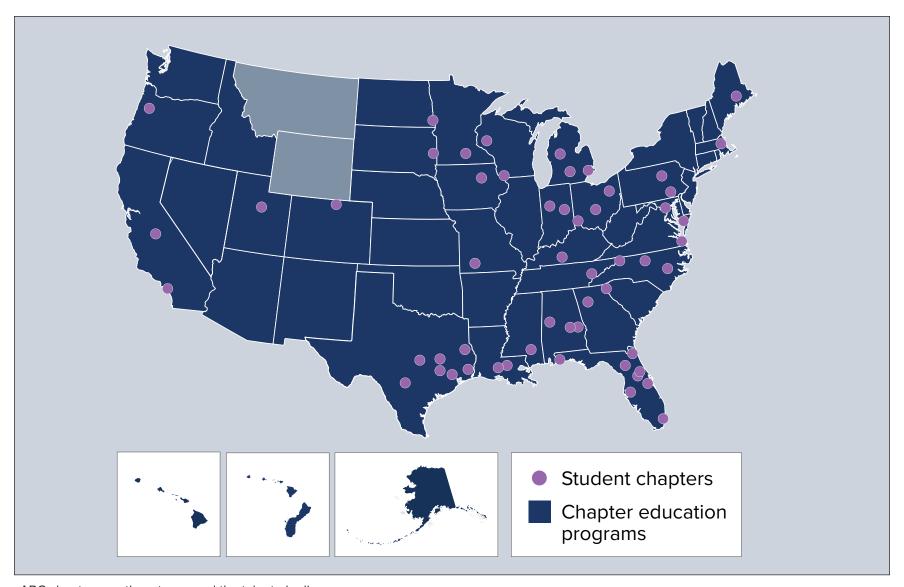
And here is why this matters: More than half of ABC members report that the labor shortage is severe or very severe, citing an exodus of older workers as the top contributor to thinning the ranks of skilled contractors and builders. ABC had been working for decades to build the infrastructure to train the next generations of the workforce and tomorrow's construction leaders.

ABC and its members work hard to recruit, educate and upskill the nation's future construction workforce. The association estimates that the industry needs to hire an additional 439,000 workers in 2025, *alone*. This means more and more skilled people will be needed to join construction firms each year as baby boomers retire.

The White House has recognized these efforts.

In September 2020, ABC was proud to receive the Pledge to America's Workers Presidential Award. This honor recognized ABC's commitment to workforce education and development, and the





ABC chapters continue to expand the talent pipeline.



2019 **Tony Rader National Roofing Partners** Coppell, Texas **Roofing Contractor**



2020 **Tim Keating** R. C. Stevens Construction Co. Winter Garden, Florida **General Contractor**



2021 Steve Klessig Keller Inc. Kaukauna, Wisconsin **General Contractor**



2022 Stephanie Schmidt-Lehmann **Poole Anderson Construction** State College, Pennsylvania **General Contractor**

organization's pledge to recruit and upskill at least 500,000 workers by 2023.

Over 400 companies and associations signed President Trump's pledge, committing to creating over 16 million opportunities for America's workforce in 2021, as the country worked to recover from the pandemic, and unemployment reached 15% nationwide.

A key feature of the millions of opportunities created through this initiative was a focus on future-oriented skills, preparing workers for jobs in tech-focused fields like construction. ABC made a promise to create apprenticeship programs, continuing education programs, on-the-job training and other workforce development efforts to benefit workers across the country.

ABC's vast network of over 800 apprenticeship, craft, safety and management education programs—including 450

government-registered apprenticeship programs across 20 different occupations—is working to build the people who build America. ABC has created more than 1,100 entry points into the industry, helping students, veterans and others who are seeking a new career with the opportunity to work where they're needed most, with the credentials to move up through the ranks of construction quickly.

One can't look at the construction industry without thinking about the hard work and contributions of immigrants to the U.S. economy and the millions of foreign-born people who contribute their time, expertise and leadership to building modern America. ABC has worked to ensure that our national immigration policies include opportunities for legal immigration, in part to address the tremendous shortage of skilled labor in construction. ABC strongly believes that bipartisan solutions are needed to address the industry's legal



2023 Milton Graugnard Cajun Industries Baton Rouge, Louisiana Industrial Contractor



2024
Buddy Henley
Henley Construction
Gaithersburg, Maryland
General Contractor



2025
J. David Pugh
Bradley Arant Boult Cummings LLP
Birmingham, Alabama
Construction Law Attorney

workforce needs, and that immigration reform can help foster economic prosperity by providing solutions for this high-demand industry.

Congress remains divided over the best policies to address the failing immigration system and the border crisis. ABC's goal is to work with the current administration and Congress to create a market-based, merit visa system that allows people who want to contribute to society and work legally in the construction industry to do so.

Now 75 years into the organization's work, ABC member contractors are nurturing the skills, expertise, passion, commitment and opportunities to succeed for the people who build America. Few of us alive today have a clear memory of what the construction landscape looked like 75 years ago, but it's unrecognizable through modern eyes. Safety was an afterthought. Education was inconsistent and often nontransferable. Few women felt that construction was the right place for them. The idea of total human health was not even

on the radar, and for those people living under the constant threat of union aggression and violence, doing good work, competing fairly and committing to transparency and democracy in the construction industry was a challenge.

By standing up and demanding freedom in the workplace, ABC members, leaders and everyone touched by the merit shop philosophy invested billions of dollars and hours in the changes the industry needed to deliver everything the modern world requires. They created competency-based and market-driven education that creates lifelong skills and expertise, safety standards higher than the industry had ever seen, and showed thousands of builders and contractors how bright and prosperous their careers and futures can be.

ABC's focus has always been simple: work toward bettering the individual, the industry and the nation. Everything the organization does derives from these ideas, and though they may seem abstract

In its December 2024 issue, ABC's Construction Executive magazine showcased photographs from readers that capture what it is like to work in today's construction industry.

or even lofty ambitions, the outcomes are visible all around us.

Freedom in the workplace is now a right enjoyed by millions of workers, whose health, safety and well-being is the gold standard of success. ABC has elevated the industry by reacting to today's needs and anticipating tomorrow's requirements, working to shape the most fundamental industry in the United States.



CELEBRATING 75 YEARS OF MERIT SHOP CONSTRUCTION



















































































