

Building Trades Delegates in U.S. and Canada Gather to Chart Course of Political Activism Ahead

One of the strengths of the organized labor movement in the United States and Canada is our ability to come together in numbers to address and focus on the issues important for working families. There is no other group of workers as coordinated or as dedicated in political activism.

At the beginning of each year, the Building Trades unions in the United States and Canada hold conferences in their respective countries to chart the course of our political activism, and how best to fight for legislature that protects our rights in the workplace, and the candidates who will represent the voice of working families in our capitals.

In April, over 3,000 union delegates attended the North American Building Trades Unions (NABTU) Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. The announced priorities for activists in attendance were to continue to press President Trump to come through on his \$1 trillion infrastructure investment plan, and the protection of our wages and benefits under the federal Davis-Bacon Act.

NABTU President Sean McGarvey, a former general vice president of the

International Union of Painters and Allied Trades, reminded the delegates that in addition to their political activism, union leaders on the local, state and national levels must also work just as diligently on the economic and business issues affecting our industries.

"It is in the best economic interests of our members and our unions," said McGarvey, "for us to go everywhere and anywhere with business and industry leaders, community leaders and political leaders, and to engage in deliberations, conversations and discussions that have the potential to advance the economic interests of our members and their families."

Among the featured speakers that week was President Donald Trump. The President reminded the crowd that one of labor's top priorities for America was one of his, as well.

"I'm calling on all Americans – Democrat, Republican, independent – to come together and take part in the great rebuilding of our country," said Trump. "That is why, in my address to Congress, I called on lawmakers to pass legislation that produces a \$1 trillion investment in the infrastructure of our country. And we need it. With your help, we can rebuild our country's bridges, airports, seaports, and water systems. We will streamline the process to get approvals quickly, so that long-delayed projects can finally move ahead."

As of this writing, the Trump infrastructure plan remains in limbo, but his administration has released more details on his proposed plan. Visit the front page of www.IUPAT.org and find JOURNAL EXTRAS to read more about it and other information discussed in this edition of the *Journal*.



IUPAT General President Kenneth Rigmaiden greets President Donald Trump at the NABTU Legislative Conference in Washington, DC in April. "You're the keepers of the great trades and traditions that built our country from the New York skyline to the Golden Gate Bridge," Trump told the over 3,000 union delegates at the conference.



CANADA FOCUSES ON WOMEN IN THE TRADES AND APPRENTICESHIPS

Hundreds of Building Trades members and leaders from across Canada convened in Ottawa in May at the annual Canada's Building Trades Unions Legislative Conference (CBTU) to discuss policy and educate members of parliament on the important work that our members do each and every day to keep the Canadian economy alive.

At the conference, the Honourable Patty Hajdu, minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, announced that the Government of Canada is rolling out a plan to support the next generation of apprentices and tradespeople – particularly women and indigenous people – to get the skills they need to succeed in a changing economy. Minister Hajdu declared, "We're helping apprentices and tradespeople get the skills they need to succeed, and breaking down barriers for women and indigenous people in pursuing a great career in a skilled trade. This new program is just one part of our plan to help Canadians in the middle class, and those working so hard to join it, get good, well-paying jobs."

The minister announced that the first phase of an \$85 million government grant initiative to support apprenticeship training facilities and expansion of programs will start in July. Apprentices and trades men and women will benefit from this new program that supports union-based apprenticeship training, innovation, and enhanced partnerships.

Understanding that this program has immense potential for the IUPAT to expand and innovate our training facilities, the IUPAT Canadian leaders took action to ensure that all of the training centers across Canada are able to apply for these monies. "We see this as an opportunity and we are preparing to take full advantage of this government program," said Robert Kucheran, general vice president of the IUPAT and chair of the Canadian Executive Board of Canada's Building Trades Unions (CBTU). "We have an opportunity to advance union-based apprenticeship training in Canada and serve to support the development of a future-focused construction workforce, helping meet the needs of our members. We cannot squander this opportunity."



**IUPAT
General Vice
President
and CBTU
Chair Robert
Kucheran
addresses
attendees
at the CBTU
Legislative
Conference.**



As a part of the Legislative Conference, the Canada's Building Trades Unions (CBTU), with the help of Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, unveiled the Canadian Building Trades Monument in Major's Hill Park in Ottawa. The monument celebrates the contributions made to society by the women and men who work in the building and construction trades, and commemorates the losses they have endured in carrying out their work.

Instead of a traditional ribbon cutting, apprentices from a number of trades cut materials of their trade with Prime Minister Trudeau. Glazier apprentice Sonia Boucher from District Council 46/Local Union 200 (Ottawa) participated in the unveiling by cutting a piece of glass with the Prime Minister.



MISSOURI EFFECTIVELY ENDS PREVAILING WAGE

As of this writing, Missouri Governor Eric Greitens signed into law a bill that ended prevailing wage on state construction projects. He did this as Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker looked on in a large photo opportunity in Earth City.

Missouri joins a long list of states where Republican and business interests have successfully lobbied to remove prevailing wage laws.

According to a recent article authored by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), "Twenty states have removed prevailing wage laws and several more have weakened them. Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Hampshire, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah, Virginia, and West Virginia, do not have any prevailing wage laws. Wisconsin no longer applies prevailing wage protections to local public construction projects, but still does for state highway projects."

The effect for construction workers on this 40-year war on prevailing wage has been a direct hit to the wallet.

More from EPI, the "real average hourly earnings of production/nonsupervisory construction workers were

\$26.17 in 1970, \$26.00 in 1980, and \$23.91 in 1990. Construction workers' hourly earnings bottomed out at \$22.97 in 1993 but have never fully recovered from their 1970 peak and were only \$25.97 in 2016."

The report goes on to sum up the war on construction wages as follows, "Construction wages are lower today than they were in 1970, despite 40 years of economic growth and a higher national income."

The fight on our wages will continue, and that is why we all must do our part to push back and protect our right to fair pay and benefits on the job.

Read the entire EPI article on the front page of www.IUPAT.org in JOURNAL EXTRAS.

Median hourly wages for construction and extraction employees, by states with prevailing wage laws, May 2015

	Hourly median wage	Cost-of-living-adjusted median hourly wage (BEA RPP)	Cost-of-living-adjusted median hourly wage (MERIC)
<i>States with prevailing wage laws</i>	\$ 22.52	\$ 22.40	\$ 20.67
<i>States without prevailing wage laws</i>	\$ 18.47	\$ 19.82	\$ 19.37
<i>Percent higher median wage in states with prevailing wage laws</i>	21.9%	13.0%	6.7%

Note: Construction occupations make up about 95.2 percent of the construction and extraction occupation category.

Source: EPI analysis of Occupational Employment Statistics data, Bureau of Economic Analysis Regional Price Parities (BEA RPP) data, and Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC) data

Economic Policy Institute

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