



Founded 1889

United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada

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TO ALL LOCAL UNION BUSINESS MANAGERS IN THE UNITED STATES

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

We need your assistance in responding to the serious challenge to UA registered apprenticeship programs as explained below.

Background

In April of 2018, a Taskforce on Apprenticeship in the United States recommended the creation of a new type of apprenticeship program, which unlike our registered programs would not be subject to the United States Department of Labor (“DOL”) or to a state Apprenticeship Agency’s approval or regulations. Instead, these Industry Recognized Apprenticeship Programs (“IRAPs”) would be approved by Standard Recognition Entities (“SREs”), which are industry-driven organizations that will be subject to very minimal DOL oversight. Following extensive lobbying by the Building Trades, the Task Force recommended that, given the success of the registered apprenticeship model in construction, IRAPs not be permitted in the construction industry.

DOL’s Current Position

On June 25, 2019, the DOL issued a Notice of Proposed Rule Making (“NPRM”) setting forth its position with respect to IRAPs and proposed regulations related to their creation and approval by SREs. With respect to the construction industry, the NPRM states only that “initially” IRAPs will not be available; however, the DOL invites public comment on this position and whether it should change in the final regulations or whether any exemption for IRAPs in the construction industry should be eliminated at some fixed date in the future.

IRAPs in the Construction Industry will be Harmful to the UA, Local Unions, and Apprenticeship Programs

Recently, both the ABC and the AGC have come out against any rule that prohibits IRAPs in the construction industry. They and their supporters have argued for decades that the requirements of the registered apprenticeship system are too burdensome and costly. They will undoubtedly seize on this opportunity to argue that IRAPs should be allowed in the construction industry, and apprentices enrolled in IRAPs should be afforded the same treatment as registered apprentices under Davis-Bacon, as well as other federal, state and local government laws that reward investments in registered apprenticeship programs. We anticipate that their efforts in this regard will be coordinated and sustained.





Your Response

There is a sixty-day comment period on the proposed rule, and during that period we need you to coordinate responses to the proposed regulations. While the UA will be submitting extensive comments forcefully supporting its position in this matter, it is essential that the DOL also hear from local unions, signatory contractors, apprentices, journeyworkers and retirees. Communications on this matter should come from our local unions to their members and not their JATCs to their apprentices. JATCs may consider filing comments as well, but should only do so after consultation with their counsel and upon approval of their Board of Trustees.

What You Need to Do – NOW

The deadline for filing these comments is Friday, August 26, 2019. The UA has developed a web-based tool to expedite the submission of as many letters as possible by offering various talking points and customization options that will generate and automatically submit comments directly to the DOL. It's important to remember that the DOL will not accept form letters so this tool will allow for the creation of multiple versions of letters based on drop down menus and selecting various topics of importance as well as identifying whether the member is an apprentice, journeyworker, retiree or even helper.

We need you to get the word out and encourage your members and contractors to submit comments to keep the construction exemption intact. Emails will be sent to all UA members in the United States on Friday, July 12th with instructions on how to easily create and submit their comment letters to the DOL. We've attached two flyers detailing the process for your convenience, including the link to the website – one flyer is specific to journeyworkers/retirees and the other is specific to apprentices/helpers. Please feel free to use this in your communications with your local union members as well. Further communications to our members will also be sent as reminders via our UA App and social media over the coming weeks as the deadline looms closer. **We must ensure that our members are heard on this vital issue before August 26th.**

Thank you in advance for your efforts to defend the registered apprenticeship training model and the training programs that have shaped the UA and will continue to do so for generations.

Fraternally yours,

Mark McManus
General President

James G. Pavesic
Director of Education and Training

Enclosures
MM: JGP:ail

cc: UA General Officers, International Representatives and Special Representatives