who we are
what we stand for
what we fight for

Laborers’ International Union of North America

www.liuna.org

LiUNA!
Feel the Power
who are we?

LIUNA—the Laborers’ International Union of North America—is the most progressive, aggressive and fastest-growing union of construction workers, and one of the most significant unions representing public service employees.

Working men and women who carry a LIUNA membership card live in every community across the U.S. and Canada and come from every part of the world. We work on highways and bridges, waterways and dams, in universities and in government. We build and weatherize houses, and make cities, counties, states and the federal government work. From pouring concrete to handling mail, from helping the sick heal to helping the young learn, we literally and figuratively build America and Canada.

We are 500,000 proud people united through collective bargaining agreements which help us earn superior pay, better benefits and more opportunity.

with LIUNA, we live better.
what do we stand for?

LIUNA stands for **fairness** for working people, regardless of color, gender, race or ethnicity, no matter our country of origin.

We stand for helping **employers succeed** based on providing the highest quality of work in the world and by being responsible members of our communities.

LIUNA stands for **individual advancement** and opening the doors to new opportunity by offering members and employers the best free adult education system there is, with training in the skills needed to build our communities and our countries.

We stand for a strong union movement that can restore the strength of the **middle class**, and we are doing our share with one of the union movement’s most ambitious organizing commitments to help tens of thousands of working people join together.

**we stand for power for working people.**
what do we fight for?

In **government**, through the power of our members and allies, on **jobsites**, through our unity and the strength of our collective bargaining agreements, and in **communities**, through our activism, friends and families.

**Everyone who works deserves**
- a fair wage
- health and safety protections
- the right to safe working conditions
- respect, and the freedom to join together in a union
- access to health care and a dignified retirement

**We owe it to working people**
- to fight for collective bargaining rights
- to defend family-supporting laws such as the U.S. Davis-Bacon Prevailing Wage Act
- to build a modern infrastructure that keeps our countries competitive and creates good jobs
- to strive for a sound pension system and national health care policy
- to stand up for laws that acknowledge the contributions of immigrants
- to make international trade fair

**we fight to reward work.**
what membership means

Being a member of LIUNA today honors a heritage that began in 1903 when courageous workers overcame hostility, threats and violence to join together.

We honor that heritage through our struggles today—being heard in government, raising standards for workers and employers on the job, and reaching out to a new generation of workers yearning for a better life. The rewards come in better pay, benefits and working conditions, and in pride for adding the strength of each of our voices to something stronger.

Whether it’s by going to work for an employer who already works with LIUNA, or by joining with co-workers to organize and bring LIUNA into your workplace, you can join us.

Laborers’ International Union of North America

LiUNA!

Feel the Power

905 16th Street NW  Washington, D.C. 20006  www.liuna.org  202-737-8320
TERENCE M. O’SULLIVAN, General President
ARMAND E. SABITONI, General Secretary-Treasurer
What do LIUNA members do?

Members of LIUNA are experienced Construction Craft Laborers (CCL) that rely on a diverse set of skills, performed on a wide variety of jobsites.

- LIUNA members build roads, bridges, tunnels, transit and energy systems as well as work on demolition and renovation projects.
- Members assist in the construction and maintenance of power plants and substations, dig trenches for lines, and repair roads after line installation, and build supporting infrastructure such as oil and gas pipelines.
- Members are skilled in general construction, concrete placement, roadway construction, site preparation, pipelaying, erosion control, hoisting and rigging, OSHA safety, permit-required confined space, rough terrain forklift operation, trenching and excavation safety, erecting turbines, and solar panel installation.

Training and Safety

LIUNA Training is a gateway for a skilled workforce; providing career paths through the best continuing education system in the world.

- The curriculum is independently accredited and is offered at more than 70 fixed and mobile sites, with courses and certificates that meet or exceed all regulatory and industry requirements.
- Starting as an apprentice, members learn core construction skills that provide a foundation of safety and productivity across all industry sectors.
- The core skills include: mastery of Blue Print Reading, Confined Space Awareness, Craft Orientation, Fall Protection, First Aid/CPR, General Construction, Hazard Communication, OSHA Safety and Health, Scaffold User, and Flagger.
- After mastering core skills, apprentices will choose a focus for advanced training in a particular industry; including Building Construction, Heavy/Highway and Utility Construction, Masonry, Demolition and Deconstruction, Pipeline, Tunneling, Environmental Remediation, and Landscaping.
- LIUNA Training programs are flexible and scalable to meet industry needs.

Opportunity

Working with LIUNA, members have opportunities for advancement and a ladder to the middleclass.

- Members start out as an apprentice and through training and work experience can move into journey worker positions.
- As a union member, members enjoy competitive pay and benefits that offer a path to the middle-class.
- LIUNA journey workers often go on to earn advanced certifications - building their careers as construction supervisors, safety officers, or training instructors.
June 23, 2016

LIUNA launches Clean Power Progress to Drive Common-Sense Energy Policy

Union campaign to spotlight the urgency of natural gas in meeting climate change goals and future energy needs

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the Laborers’ International Union of North America (LIUNA) launched Clean Power Progress, an ambitious state-by-state campaign to drive a common-sense energy policy that will help our nation meet clean energy goals and our growing energy needs.

Clean Power Progress will advocate for natural gas as a crucial bridge to a clean energy economy. The federal government’s Clean Power Plan goals are ambitious and will lead to a shift away from traditional energy sources, which could mean a 21 percent nationwide energy deficit by 2030 unless more energy is brought online. Natural gas is abundant in America, it produces little carbon, and has been credited as a key driver behind the decline in U.S. greenhouse gas emissions in recent years. The campaign also will focus on the importance of nuclear energy and clean coal technology.

“Clean Power Progress will cut through the politics and ideology that have distorted the debate on clean energy,” said LIUNA General President Terry O’Sullivan. “Natural gas is already helping us reduce our carbon emissions – it burns cleaner, results in lower energy bills, and even backs up renewables. Clean Power Progress will demonstrate that if we develop this resource to the highest standards, we can keep the lights on and help cut America’s greenhouse gas emissions.”

The planned closures of 10 nuclear energy plants and misguided opposition to natural gas infrastructure is putting many states in the cross-hairs. The Clean Power Progress campaign will highlight the energy shortage each state will face as they work to meet clean power targets.

“It’s time to take a hard look at our energy needs and start bridging the gap with a common-sense energy policy that includes natural gas,” O’Sullivan said. “Renewables hold a tremendous amount of potential but as they are brought to scale, natural gas is critical as a cleaner source of energy.”

Clean Power Progress tools will help lawmakers and policymakers identify key infrastructure needs and identify a comprehensive solution that will keep the lights on in 2030 and beyond.

To learn more, please visit CleanPowerProgress.org.

The half-million members of LIUNA – the Laborers’ International Union of North America – are on the forefront of the construction industry, a powerhouse of workers who are proud to build America.
What is Clean Power Progress?

- Clean Power Progress is an ambitious state-by-state campaign to drive an energy policy that will help our nation meet clean energy goals and our growing energy needs.
- Natural gas is already helping us reduce our carbon emissions – it burns cleaner, results in lower energy bills, and even backs up renewables.
- It’s time to put aside the politics and ideology distorting energy policy and adopt a common-sense strategy that includes building out natural gas infrastructure.

We are facing an energy shortfall

- The federal government’s Clean Power Plan goals are ambitious and will lead to a shift away from traditional energy sources.
- States have emissions reductions targets and nationally we must reduce carbon emissions by almost a third by 2030.
- Without building new capacity, the United States would face at least a 21 percent power deficit by 2030.

Natural Gas is clean and affordable

- Natural gas is abundant in America, it produces little carbon, and has been credited as a key driver behind the decline in U.S. greenhouse gas emissions in recent years.
- Transitioning from higher-carbon energy sources to more natural gas could further cut our carbon emissions.
- Natural gas is two-thirds the cost of wind power and one-quarter the cost of solar energy.

Renewables alone are not enough

- LIUNA supports a realistic path to cutting carbon that includes natural gas and renewables but renewables are still maturing and remain more expensive than natural gas.
- Renewable energy sources are intermittent and require backup fuels. Natural gas provides constant, reliable power to ensure renewables succeed.
- To address the 2030 national energy shortfall, we would need an area twice the size of Yellowstone Park – or the entire state of Connecticut – covered with solar panels.

Shovel-ready projects are stalled

- Misinformation and activist opposition is stalling key projects that would bring natural gas to hundreds of thousands of Americans, boost the economy and create good jobs.
- Building, repairing and maintaining natural gas infrastructure with a skilled workforce will protect communities and the environment, as well as, improving overall safety.
- The struggle to get projects approved is derailing progress on clean power goals and setting the stage for dangerous power disruptions in the future.

About

Clean Power Progress is a project of LIUNA—the Laborers’ International Union of North America. We are a strong and proud union of construction workers founded by immigrant workers in 1903. A half-million strong, we are united through collective bargaining agreements which help us earn family-supporting pay, good benefits and the opportunity for advancement and better lives. LIUNA members are proud to be on the forefront of the construction and energy industries.

www.CleanPowerProgress.org
Our Energy Future

Growth in the energy industry can put millions of men and women to work, power U.S. economic growth, make our nation energy independent and build a foundation to slow global warming. LIUNA members are on the forefront; working in all sectors of the energy industry from power plant construction and natural gas pipelines to wind and solar installations. LIUNA members value good energy jobs because they offer family-supporting careers and strengthen our country.

An “all-of-the-above” energy policy can help reshape America’s energy future.

- The U.S. will continue to be dependent on a variety of energy resources, including coal, oil, natural gas, wind, solar and nuclear power.
- Becoming less reliant on oil from hostile nations by developing North America’s energy resources will improve our economy, create jobs, and strengthen national security.
- Oil and natural gas – which supply 62 percent of our energy today – will provide much of the energy we need in the decades to come and are important components of the “all-of-the-above” approach.
- A balanced and comprehensive energy policy must include the expansion of our nation’s pipeline infrastructure, including the Keystone XL pipeline. The construction of this project represents an immediate opportunity for thousands of men and women to get back to work on good union jobs and provide for their families.

The solution to climate change is comprehensive climate change legislation.

- LIUNA has been on the forefront of supporting climate change legislation with carbon reduction targets as high as any other union. However, attempts to derail energy production project-by-project, as some in the environmental movement advocate, won’t impact climate change and will only stall creation of desperately needed jobs.
- LIUNA opposes extreme environmental measures that undermine U.S. economic growth, harm working families and place ourselves at a disadvantage to other nations.

Investing in energy development is long overdue and has the potential of creating hundreds of thousands of jobs.

- The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) awarded U.S. energy infrastructure a D+ in 2013 and found a $107 billion investment gap in our electricity infrastructure. Closing the gap would save American businesses $126 billion, prevent the loss of 529,000 jobs and avert $656 billion in personal income losses by 2020.
- Modernizing and upgrading America’s electric transmission system alone could create an additional 150,000 to 200,000 jobs every year over the next two decades and make energy delivery more efficient and reliable.
- With responsible development of America’s own vast domestic resources, the natural gas and oil industry could create 1 million new jobs over the next seven years.
An Opportunity for $1 Billion in Wages, 10,000 Construction Careers and Abundant, Affordable Energy

The Rover Pipeline will provide the first direct access for Michigan and northern Ohio to the nation’s massive Marcellus Shale natural gas reserves, creating new economic opportunities to communities, workers and businesses in both states.

- The 800-mile project would supply domestically produced natural gas to manufacturers, utilities and distributors to generate heat and electricity for homes and businesses in the Midwest, predominantly in Michigan and northern Ohio.

- The project owner, Energy Transfer Partners, estimates the pipeline would inject $4.3 billion of investment into state and local economies, with $1 billion in direct wages for 10,000 construction workers.

- Landowners along the route are expected to be paid approximately $100 million for easement rights. The project will create an estimated $154 million in tax revenues for states along the route, including property taxes of $73 million in Ohio and $19 million in Michigan.

- The project will increase supplies of natural gas for Ohio residents, who are the eighth largest consumers of the fuel, and for Michigan residents, who are the ninth largest consumers of natural gas in the nation.

Pipelines built by skilled, well-trained crafts workers are the safest way to deliver natural gas – 70 times safer than by truck, according to a recent Pro Publica special report.

- The pipeline would be built by LIUNA members, whose organization has more than a century of experience safely building pipelines in virtually every state and province of the U.S. and Canada.

- LIUNA invests about $100 million a year in skills training for construction workers through more than 70 mobile and fixed training centers. Those centers offer 164 hours of pipeline-specific instruction.

- The pipeline’s potential route was based on professional surveys and environmental studies in order to avoid sensitive areas. About 80 percent of the pipeline would be at least 3 feet underground.

- Upon completion, the pipeline will be state-of-the-art. It will be remotely monitored internally and externally 24 hours a day and will be equipped with automated shut-off valves.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: communications@liuna.org or 202-942-2246

Rejection of New York’s Constitution Pipeline Derails Clean Power Progress & Affordable Energy

Washington, D.C. (April 26, 2016) – Terry O’Sullivan, General President of LIUNA – the Laborers’ International Union of North America – made the following statement today on the State of New York’s decision to reject construction of the Constitution Pipeline:

The Constitution Pipeline permit denial by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) is both a disappointment and an insult to the citizens of New York and the thousands of hard working tradesmen and women who would have benefited from the good jobs and affordable clean energy. The project was shovel-ready and would have been built under a Project Labor Agreement; ensuring that thousands of highly-skilled and trained construction workers would have job opportunities with family-supporting wages and benefits.

The unusual decision to deny a federally-approved project sacrifices the best interests of New Yorkers. Utilizing skilled construction workers and responsible contractors, pipelines are safe. Despite the hysteria surrounding pipeline construction, pipelines are the safest way to transport natural gas.

The facts that have been completely disregarded are that expansion of natural gas is the best hope for affordable energy in a region with some of the highest energy costs in the nation. Without it, New York cannot meet future energy demands or clean power goals. The scheduled closure of the FitzPatrick nuclear power plant and the proposed closure of the state’s three remaining coal plants will take enough energy offline to power more than a million homes. The closures combined with anticipated increases in demand and EPA goals to reduce emissions by 10 percent will create a shortfall of 29 million megawatt hours by 2030. Fully two thirds of New York's clean energy requirements could be met by using natural gas: without it and projects like the Constitution Pipeline, there is not a realistic scenario for meeting these goals or keeping the lights on.

Instead of considering what is in the best interest of the people of the great state of New York, the decision by the NYSDEC undermines the economy, progress on clean power, and access to affordable energy.

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Bipartisan Senate Energy Bill Will Strengthen Economy and Unlock Good Jobs and Clean Energy


“On behalf of the 500,000 members of the Laborers’ International Union of North America, I commend the Senate on their bipartisan vote (85-12) in favor for much needed energy legislation that will strengthen our economy and unlock good jobs and clean energy.

The bill streamlines the process for construction of pipelines on federal land and the natural gas export permit application process, which will help position the United States to lead globally as a clean energy super power, bring affordable energy to U.S. consumers, and create good jobs. It will also increase investment in renewable energies such as wind, solar, and hydropower and amend the Federal Power Act to encourage hydropower development by extending the total period for preliminary permits.

The bill has important provisions to incentivize energy efficiency for new state and commercial building construction; including a requirement that the Department of Energy work closely with manufacturers to invest in the research, development and commercialization of updated energy efficient technologies.

Senate Bill 2012 also addresses critical gaps in America’s nuclear energy research and production. LIUNA strongly believes that nuclear energy is not only integral to a clean energy economy, but it provides good jobs for workers across the country.

LIUNA urges the Senate and House to work together so that this bill can be conferenced and presented to the President and become law.”

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Laborers’ Union Applauds FERC Decision on AIM Project, Supports Good Jobs Building New England’s Energy Future

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 4, 2015

Providence, RI – The New England Region of the Laborers’ International Union of North America (LiUNA) applauds the decision of FERC to move Spectra Energy’s Algonquin Incremental Market Project (AIM) forward. “This decision is a victory for working families in our region -- it will not only translate into jobs for our Construction Craft Laborers who build this pipeline, but additionally it will mean lower heating and gas bills for households and businesses throughout New England.” Armand E. Sabitoni, LiUNA’s General Secretary-Treasurer and New England Regional Manager announced today.

Families across New England face some of the highest energy costs in the country placing a severe strain on their personal finances. LiUNA strongly supports solutions to those issues and we believe in the expansion of natural gas infrastructure and the resulting economic benefits that projects like AIM can deliver to communities. LiUNA’s trained and highly skilled members take great pride in ensuring that these types of projects are completed in a safe and timely manner and we stand ready to get to work on this important energy infrastructure project. Our union is enthusiastic about our strong partnerships with the energy industry as we continue to advocate securing America’s energy future.

The New England Region of the Laborer’s International Union of North America is home to 76 local unions and 8 District Councils in the states of New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont. We are one of the nine regions of the Laborers’ International Union of North America. LiUNA represents over 500,000 working men and women across the United States and Canada working in construction, and in a variety of other industries including healthcare and industrial environments, as well as municipal, state and federal employees.

http://www.nelaborers.org/home

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: communications@liuna.org or 202-942-2246

In Communities Across the Nation, LIUNA Members are Helping to Win Support For Projects That Help Build A Strong Energy Future

**In Northeast and Midwest, 100s of Members Counter Irrational Opposition With Testimony, Letters and Personal Lobbying for Spectra Pipeline Projects**

*Washington, DC. (January 26, 2015) –* In just the past week, more than 200 LIUNA members turned out to voice support for energy projects that build good, family-supporting construction careers, part of an ongoing effort by the union to make sure public officials hear about the benefits of the projects from local workers.

On Wednesday and Thursday, LIUNA members testified before the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation’s two hearings in support of Spectra Energy’s Algonquin Incremental Market pipeline project. More than 400 members had previously submitted comments in support of the project to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and dozens of members have lobbied their local community leaders.

In Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Ohio, Michigan, Iowa and other states across the U.S., LIUNA members have provided thousands of letters of support for natural gas pipelines and submitted hundreds of hours of comment and testimony in support of projects for Spectra and other energy companies. Members have been delivering a consistent message about valuable construction careers, high-quality and safe pipeline work, and the need for affordable energy.

The union has developed a reputation among energy companies as a valuable ally in winning approval of projects due to its ability to mobilize its members, most of whom work and live in affected communities.

“The current energy boom is supporting hundreds of thousands of good construction careers,” LIUNA General President Terry O’Sullivan said. “That’s good for America, but it’s also in our interest and the interest of contractors to keep that going.” O’Sullivan said that means overcoming irrational opposition, but also making sure the projects are built safely with highly-skilled and trained workers.

“There’s a right way to build a pipeline and that’s why more contractors are turning to us,” he said, noting that LIUNA has trained workers in pipeline construction since its founding more than 100 years ago. Today, the union has more than 70 fixed and mobile training centers and offers 164 hours of pipeline-specific instruction.

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*The half-million members of LIUNA – the Laborers’ International Union of North America – are on the forefront of the construction industry, a powerhouse of workers who are proud to build America.*
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LIUNA Members Push for Safe, Skilled Workforce on Sabal Trail

Miami, Fla. (October 16, 2015)– In the last two weeks, LIUNA members turned out in force to weigh in on the proposed Sabal Trail Pipeline at hearings across Florida and Georgia. Our members, who are experts in building pipelines, will be building the majority of the Florida portion of Sabal Trail. Members participated in the review process to push Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) reviewers to consider the experience and qualifications of the workers who will build Sabal Trail.

LIUNA Local 1652 Business Manager, Tom Matthews, who represents Florida construction workers told FERC reviewers that, “We believe that to avoid spills and damage to property, pipelines should be built by contractors who provide best in class training to their employees.” LIUNA members are experts in the pipeline industry and are a safe, skilled workforce; trained to restore land to as good or better condition. LIUNA works with contractors who specialize in horizontal directional drilling, which is a type of drilling that will enable Sabal Trail to safely traverse many waterways.

“We are encouraged by Spectra’s choice of contractors for much of the construction in Florida and the economic benefits to the community of using a local and skilled workforce, however, we are asking Spectra Energy to ensure that every portion of the pipeline be constructed to the highest possible standard and using the safest and most skilled workforce,” said Matthews.

Members belong to an organization with more than a century of experience safely building pipelines in virtually every state and province of the U.S. and Canada. Over the last five years, members have worked more than 80 million hours in the pipeline sector.

Building pipelines can create steady, reliable construction careers while boosting the economy. According to a recent economic study, construction of Sabal Trail will generate an estimated $755 million through just one year of construction impacts and employ 5,667 people during the course of constructing. The permanent economic impacts will result in $22 million in annual wages and $74 million in total economic output.

LIUNA spoke out in hearing after hearing; making the case that when built with qualified contractors, pipeline work can be a lifeline to good jobs with family-supporting pay, healthcare and retirement benefits.
Commentary: Shale revolution fulfills promise on jobs, energy, environment

By David Spigelmyer, JULY 22, 2016

While the daily headlines and nonstop, 24-hour news cycles focus overwhelmingly on issues that often divide the nation, it can be easy to lose sight of where common ground exists and what shared commitments bring us together.

And there's more that unites us - business and labor as well as Republicans, Democrats, and independents - than divides us. While division might drive TV ratings and social-media clicks, it's no secret that all Americans support a stronger economy with low unemployment; a thriving manufacturing sector that creates middle-class jobs for families; and a healthier, cleaner environment for our kids and grandkids.

America's shale revolution is making once-unthinkable progress on the nation's shared energy, environment, economic, and security objectives. And as President Obama has said, "we need to encourage" domestic natural-gas development and its broad benefits.

Advancing commonsense policies that view our clean-burning natural-gas resources as significant assets rather than a liability will allow our nation to continue to lead the world in air-quality improvements, all while creating hundreds of thousands of well-paying middle-class jobs, many of them in the building and union trades as well as across the manufacturing sector.

But don't take it from me. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, speaking to America's position as the world's largest oil and natural-gas producer, has emphasized that the shale revolution holds "enormous" promise in jump-starting American manufacturing once again.

She's absolutely right. Thanks to shale, American manufacturers have gained the competitive edge in an increasingly global marketplace and are expanding, adding more shifts, and hiring more workers to produce "Made in America" goods once again. In fact, shale development will drive the creation of 930,000 domestic manufacturing jobs by 2030 and 1.41 million by 2040. And these natural-gas-driven American manufacturing jobs, as the president has stated, are "the quintessential middle-class job."

Look no further than the Marcus Hook complex here in Southeastern Pennsylvania for a key example of manufacturing's comeback. Marcus Hook has been transformed from a shuttered plant into a bustling petrochemical refining, storage, and export facility that supports thousands of local jobs. This economic progress does not occur without the development of natural gas from the Marcellus Shale.

But we need more pipelines to move our abundant natural-gas resources to market so that we fully capitalize on the nation's newfound manufacturing potential. These critical projects are "a lifeline to family-supporting jobs," as the Laborers International Union of North America's Dennis Martire has said.

And just as Americans want more jobs and a stronger economy, they also want clean air and a healthy environment. With natural gas, we can have both. It presents a false choice to suggest otherwise.

For the first time since the industrial revolution, and as a result of greater natural-gas use, carbon emissions have begun to decouple from economic growth, meaning that America's economy can expand without increasing carbon emissions, the New York Times reported in April. This significant progress came on the heels
of federal data confirming that America leads the world in carbon-emission reductions, thanks in large part to
the greater use of clean-burning, domestically produced natural gas.

No single policy or party platform can address all of America's complex energy and environmental challenges
and needs. But given the broad economic, environmental, and national-security benefits of natural gas, it would
be a mistake for the next president not to ensure that policies encourage - rather than discourage - the safe
development of clean-burning natural gas, which supports hundreds of thousands of American jobs and is
perhaps the single most effective tool to enhance our air quality.
Several Virginia environmental groups will march on Democratic Gov. Terry McAuliffe's home tomorrow to protest his support of natural gas pipelines and offshore oil drilling.

They say they want to express their "deep dissatisfaction" with his record on climate change, but not all their peers are as displeased with McAuliffe's work.

Multiple national environmental groups with workers in the state say they are still largely supportive of him, even though they don't love his defense of oil and gas. McAuliffe's overall push away from coal and toward renewable energy keeps him in their good graces, they argue.

"I think his record is pretty clear as far as using executive action to address climate change and expand clean energy wherever he can ... especially when you compare him to his predecessor," said Walton Shepherd, a staff attorney with Natural Resources Defense Council.

The rift in Virginia is spotlighting a growing debate around the country: Can politicians support natural gas and still be considered climate friendly? And as the United States shifts away from coal-fired power, what role should natural gas play versus renewables?

The groups protesting tomorrow say they don't think it should play any role. They have like-minded supporters around the country, including groups that want presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton to ban the hydraulic fracturing process that has allowed for a natural gas boom in the United States.

"The governor would like to say he's the best governor on clean energy and climate change that Virginia's ever had, but honestly, that's a very low bar," said Mike Tidwell, the director of the Chesapeake Climate Action Network, which is marching tomorrow and has given McAuliffe's environmental record a grade of D-plus. "There's never been a coalition like this before. That's how deep the dissatisfaction is with Terry McAuliffe and how widespread."

Hamstrung by the Legislature?

McAuliffe in 2013 ran a pro-climate campaign against former Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli (R), who denied that human action is contributing to climate change. Many environmental groups contributed to McAuliffe's campaign in that race, including the League of Conservation Voters and the NextGen Climate Action Committee.

The groups marching tomorrow say McAuliffe pulled a classic bait-and-switch move.

The Chesapeake Climate Action Network, the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, Appalachian Voices, Virginia Organizing and other groups will lead the march in Richmond tomorrow, joined by Jane Kleeb, an
organizer behind protests against the Keystone XL pipeline. Celebrity climate activist Mark Ruffalo has encouraged people to participate, although he will be filming a movie in Australia.

The advocates marching have myriad problems with McAuliffe's energy and environment policies. But they are largely decrying his support of two natural gas pipelines: the 550-mile Atlantic Coast Pipeline from West Virginia to Virginia and North Carolina, and the 300-mile Mountain Valley Pipeline from West Virginia to Virginia. They also oppose his backing of offshore oil development and handling of coal ash dumping.

Virginia directly feels the effects of climate change, especially as coastal areas experience more frequent and severe flooding in the face of sea-level rise. The Chesapeake Climate Action Network did give McAuliffe one decent grade, a B-minus, on "fighting sea-level rise and flooding impacts here now."

But other groups, including NRDC and the state chapter of the League of Conservation Voters, paint a more complicated picture of McAuliffe's climate work.

Shepherd said "the current General Assembly that the governor has to deal with is essentially dominated by climate deniers or polluter interests that have essentially tried to tie is hands at every turn ... but he's forged ahead." When lawmakers blocked the state's Department of Environmental Quality from spending money to prepare for the Supreme Court-halted Clean Power Plan, McAuliffe moved ahead with an executive order to reduce emissions, he noted.

"That puts him ahead of the pack as far as climate change and clean energy goes," Shepherd said.

Greta Bagwell, the Virginia League of Conservation Voters' deputy director, penned an op-ed in The Roanoke Times in late May defending McAuliffe's climate work, including vetoing the extension of Virginia's coal mine tax credit, fending off legislative attempts to make it harder for the state to comply with U.S. EPA's Clean Power Plan, and advancing renewable power and energy efficiency.

"Let me be clear: There are aspects of McAuliffe's energy platform that we do disagree with," Bagwell wrote, including his support of gas infrastructure projects by the state's main power provider, Dominion Resources Inc. "But rather than fixate on points of disagreement, we have put our energy into working with the administration on the clean energy policies where we are on the same page," she continued. "The truth is there is only so much McAuliffe, or any other sitting governor, can accomplish without a willing Legislature."

**Underscoring the debate on gas**

The split over McAuliffe represents a broader debate about the future use of natural gas, a fossil fuel that produces half the greenhouse gas emissions of coal when burned for electricity.

Currently, natural gas and coal-fired power each account for one-third of U.S. power production with natural gas and renewable power advancing and coal rapidly declining. But staunch opponents of natural gas say it may be nearly as bad for climate change as coal when one counts the methane emitted when natural gas is produced and transported. Data in that area are still emerging, although many in the scientific community believe natural gas use poses some climate benefits over coal use.

Industry groups and some environmentalists contend natural gas will be needed to support wind and solar power when the wind isn't blowing and the sun isn't shining. That's especially true, they say, as more and more nuclear power plants go offline because they cannot compete with cheap natural gas.
Still, some activists are pushing for the country to move entirely to renewable power, and Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley (D) has introduced a bill to require 100 percent of power to come from renewable sources by 2050 (Greenwire, July 18).

Shepherd said NRDC believes baseload power like natural gas may be needed in the short term to balance out intermittent renewable power in the interim period before battery storage becomes more affordable and can be deployed at the national scale.

But he thinks the grid already has enough natural gas power on the grid to provide that balance.

NRDC has opposed further build-out of gas pipelines in general unless the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission conducts a cumulative assessment of whether more infrastructure is needed, Shepherd said.

Fights over natural gas are playing out at the national level, too. The shale boom in the United States and resulting flood of cheap fuel on the market has come largely from fracking. Environmental advocates have expressed disappointment that Clinton is not including a ban on fracking in her platform but is instead calling for better regulation of the industry (EnergyWire, July 8).

The battles over natural gas are growing so large that the Laborers' International Union of North America recently launched a campaign to support gas pipeline projects and state legislators who back them. LIUNA also supports renewable power projects where unionized laborers work but is pushing for states to recognize the need for natural gas and its infrastructure as the U.S. power system curbs carbon emissions.

LIUNA representatives claim the opposition to natural gas sometimes "grows in a vacuum" without consideration of how the power system works.

"The march and rally is misdirected and counterproductive," said Terry O'Sullivan, general president of LIUNA. "The Atlantic Coast Pipeline will actually move Virginia closer to a clean energy future and help the state meet Clean Power Plan goals. The governor is demonstrating strong environmental leadership in supporting the pipeline."

'A transition or a bridge?'

McAuliffe has said the Atlantic Cost pipeline will create jobs. He argues access to natural gas will keep electricity rates down as Virginia consumes more power while aiming for a lower carbon emissions rate.

Those arguments are familiar among governors backing natural gas projects around the country.

Former Colorado Gov. Bill Ritter (D), who now directs the Center for New Energy Economy, which assists policymakers with the transition to cleaner power, told a meeting of state environment agencies in Washington, D.C., yesterday that governors must focus on both the economic and environmental legacies they will leave behind.

Natural gas, Ritter said, produces fewer health-harming air pollutants and fewer greenhouse gas emissions than coal.

"I don't know whether it's a transition or a bridge. I think it's necessary now. It's going to be necessary for a long time," Ritter said. "And we should do everything we can to ensure we have effective regulations in place around our natural gas production and effective enforcement in place. But understand, it is, I think, an important resource for us as a nation."
EPA has issued a final rule for methane emissions from new sources and is working on a regulation to govern existing sources. State agencies are also focused on the issue. Agency directors at the meeting yesterday shared information about how they are trying to address emissions from shale gas extraction.

Tidwell, however, says regulation isn't enough. He worries investing in costly natural gas infrastructure will lock the region into using it for decades to come and slow renewable power development.

"Advocating for gas is dramatically lowering the moment at which we reach a zero-carbon, fully decarbonized economy," he said.

The groups he will march with want McAuliffe to challenge pipeline water permits, stop supporting offshore oil development and take action to stop coal ash dumping.

"Everything that we're asking for on Saturday are things the governor can do on his own," Tidwell said.
If you’ve been reading newspaper headlines in recent weeks, you may think environmentalists and unions are clashing with each other over clean energy policy. In fact, infrastructure unions such as LIUNA and climate advocates around the world share the same goal of fighting climate change. Where we differ passionately is in our strategy and approach to reaching that goal. It’s time to put to rest the false choice between jobs and the environment and have a rational discussion about a common-sense path to a clean energy future.

Just as our country’s energy mix is complex, so is the solution to climate change. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, about 37 percent of nation’s overall energy usage is from petroleum and about 16 percent is from coal. Carbon-free nuclear power provides about 8 percent of our energy, but, a number of plants are slated for closure and new capacity is unlikely. That means more than half of our current energy sources face an uncertain future. A growing fossil fuel sector – natural gas – now accounts for nearly a third of our energy.

Often depicted as the panacea for our nation’s energy future, renewable energy sources are growing and now provide about 8 percent of our energy. The problem is, they are not growing
fast enough, and demand continues to outpace capacity. According to the Department of Energy’s National Renewable Energy Laboratory, it will be 2050 before the country will be 80 percent powered 24-7 by renewable energies.

We must act faster than that.

The Clean Power Plan, proposed by President Obama last year, challenges the United States to reduce our carbon emissions by nearly a third by 2030. Every state has a target under this plan.

The plan is worthwhile and ambitious, but it also threatens to create a critical energy void. If each state were to meet its goal solely by eliminating oil and coal, without adding any capacity, the United States faces at least a 21 percent power deficit by 2030. That is more electricity than the U.S. industrial sector consumed in 2015 for agriculture, assembly lines and construction combined.

As much as we embrace renewables, they are not ready to replace that lost energy by themselves. To fill that 2030 clean energy shortage, America would need over 3.8 million acres of solar panels – costing about $1.8 trillion and covering an area nearly twice the size of Yellowstone National Park.

The good news is that we don’t have to choose just one form of energy. Natural gas produces 50 percent less carbon than coal, and is credited as a key driver for the decline in U.S. greenhouse gas emissions in recent years. Natural gas is also a critical backup fuel for renewables, many of which are intermittent power sources. If the United States takes advantage of the abundance of natural gas and develops it to the highest environmental standards, we can be responsible stewards of the planet and provide power until renewables fully mature.

It is true that as a union of construction workers, our interest is in creating and protecting jobs that help men and women care for their families and their futures. We would be derelict in our responsibilities if that were not so. But we also understand and believe in the greater good – and that means leaving a legacy of cleaner air for our workers’ children and grandchildren.

We believe that our nation can set its sights on, and reach the goal of, an economy that dramatically reduces carbon emissions. It is not, however, rational to wage war against a major source of energy without an alternative, nor is it honest to equate reason and reality with disregard for the planet.

If environmentalists care about a path forward on climate change and clean energy, they should join with their allies in the working class on a common-sense plan to achieve their stated goal.

O’Sullivan is General President of the Laborers’ International Union of North America, which represents a half-million workers predominantly in the construction industry.
LABOR WANTS THE BRIDGE FUEL: The Laborers' International Union of North America, which represents construction workers, is today announcing a campaign to push for natural gas as an important part of meeting the goals of the Clean Power Plan. In contrast to environmental groups who have grown cold to natural gas in recent years, the union argues the fuel can replace the baseload power disappearing with the retirement of nuclear plants and provide a backstop for renewables.

"It's time to take a hard look at our energy needs and start bridging the gap with a common-sense energy policy that includes natural gas," said LIUNA President Terry O'Sullivan. "Renewables hold a tremendous amount of potential and as they are brought to scale, natural gas is critical as a cleaner source of energy." The union will push its message through a website, www.cleanpowerprogress.org, which will serve as an energy hub, and through its social media channels. LIUNA has endorsed Hillary Clinton for president, but the campaign for more natural gas could potentially put her in a tough spot, caught between labor and supporters of Sen. Bernie Sanders who would like to see an end to fracking and fossil fuels more generally.
One labor union is promoting high pipeline standards in North Dakota's oil fields by surveying lines around the Bakken Shale.

Evan Whiteford, an organizer for the state Laborers' International Union of North America, looks out for bad techniques to inform future projects and ensure locals aren't being burned by lazy companies.

"About every landowner that's got a pipeline has got a nightmare, a horror story," Whiteford said. "You start getting too many bad players out there in the field and eventually it starts hurting the industry pretty bad."

Whiteford, a former pipeliner, said his union testifies before the North Dakota Public Service Commission on pipeline proposals, but many of the bad lines, often flanked by dead vegetation, are largely unregulated. He says the worst violators are the smaller gathering pipelines.

"They're the ones that are the most damaging right now in this area, as far as reclamation issues, leaking, not knowing what's happening with them," Whiteford said.

The North Dakota Industrial Commission is considering rules to increase state regulation of gathering pipelines, which, if passed, could take effect as soon as Oct. 1.

While some are fighting to wait until the Legislature can have a say, the Laborers' International Union supports the regulations. Union members, including Whiteford, have heard pipeliners migrating into the area say "anything goes" in North Dakota. The union members also note incorrect pipe handling leading to corrosion, insufficient wetlands protections and careless work exposing other companies' lines.

The state Oil and Gas Division is reviewing comments and will present a final proposal to the Industrial Commission on June 29.

Whiteford said the rules are only as good as the enforcement.

"How effectively are they going to monitor it and show up on locations?" Whiteford asked. "And if they do find infractions, what are the consequences for that and who's going to follow up with that? Those are the questions I have in my mind" (Amy Dalrymple, Fargo Forum, June 18). -- MB
Terry O'Sullivan: It's time to move ahead with Dakota Access Pipeline

By Terry O'Sullivan, Jun. 10, 2016

Much of the recent debate over the Dakota Access Pipeline is missing a key point that should matter to every resident of Illinois. To be sure, affected communities, including landowners and Native Americans, deserve to have their concerns and issues addressed. But on a much larger scale, we must voice a resounding "no" to attempts to distort the regulatory process by transforming it into a political tool.

This critical energy infrastructure project has already been approved on its merits by four state regulatory boards. Each of the state agencies has indicated that the benefits of the project not only outweigh the costs, but will improve the quality of energy access to the residents of those states. These regulatory bodies reviewed hundreds of pages of testimony and comments from affected communities, including environmental and cultural experts.

The permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is one of the last outstanding approvals. Yet rather than accept the outcome, some opponents have requested the intercession of the federal government into the review process by pressuring the Corps. They have requested this intervention despite the state reviews and the fact the Corps district office has already determined the project would not cause significant environmental harm.

Given that issues on both side of the debate have been aired and addressed, one can only conclude that opponents are willing to reject the needs of others, the greater good and a fair regulatory process in their zeal to kill a pipeline.

LIUNA members want to go to work every day building our country’s energy future. They are among the most skilled and highly trained construction crafts workers in the world. Projects like the Dakota Access are more than just pipelines — they are lifelines that will help workers practice their craft through the thousands of good, family-supporting jobs the project will create. The project is forecast to have a $5 billion positive economic impact, including nearly $200 million in payments to landowners and $1.9 billion in wages, including $303 million in wages in Illinois.

Not only are jobs at stake — so too is the safety and lifestyles of residents in communities from the Dakotas to Illinois. The fuel the pipeline would carry will move regardless of whether the project is built. It is a fact that moving the fuel by train or truck creates much greater hazards and dangers than a state-of-the-art pipeline, and reducing gridlock on major transportation corridors caused by surface transportation of fuels will free up road and rail capacity for commerce.

It has become part of the playbook of some who oppose major energy projects to distort and misuse the review process. There is a system in place for an independent review by the Army Corps of Engineers and we should stick with it rather than second-guessing due process. It is destructive to pressure the Corps to cater to the whims of environmental elites. That is not what Illinois or our country needs.
Should Massachusetts oppose further natural gas pipeline construction in the state?

NO

MAY 27, 2016

Scott Gustafson - Plymouth resident, organizer, Laborers International Union of North America

When it comes to a responsible energy solution, “no” is not a policy that will keep the lights on. And yet there are those who flatly refuse any new projects without providing realistic alternatives.

Massachusetts faces an energy crisis. Based on our analysis of federal projections, my union estimates national electricity demand will rise about 14 percent by 2030. Factoring in the loss of power when the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station closes, and the required 18 percent emissions cut under the federal Clean Power Plan, we calculate there will be a 32 percent power deficit. Natural gas – and the infrastructure to deliver it – is our best option to keep the lights on and meet clean power goals.

Despite the extremist rhetoric, pipelines are the safest way to transport natural gas. I am proud to stand with thousands of your neighbors across Southeastern Massachusetts who belong to an organization with extensive experience safely building pipelines and other energy infrastructure from oil and natural gas to hydropower, solar, and wind projects. When pipelines are union-built by responsible contractors and a skilled workforce, they can bring millions in economic benefits and ensure that thousands of highly-skilled construction workers have job opportunities with family-supporting wages and benefits.

Two projects nearby, the Atlantic Bridge Project and Access Northeast, could deliver environmental progress, along with hundreds of jobs and support for the area’s power grid. Though the vocal “keep it in the ground” crowd share my hope for a cleaner Massachusetts, what is their plan? They advocate for renewables, but those technologies aren’t even close to meeting our energy needs right now. It would take 38,000 acres of solar panels – an area the size of Boston – to meet the 32 percent deficit, based on a formula provided by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory. Natural gas can carry the weight until renewables advance enough for large-scale use. Natural gas is a cleaner-burning resource that is already helping Massachusetts residents cut energy bills and reduce emissions. The state should lead the way – not stand in the way – with progressive policies that help us power our homes in the safest and cleanest way possible.
Don’t blame natural gas, Sen. Sanders, embrace it (Commentary)

By Terry O'Sullivan | April 16, 2016

Editor's note: This is part of the last batch of letters we’ll publish before Tuesday's primary.

O'Sullivan serves as the General President of the Laborers' International Union of North America.

We’ve been hearing a lot from Sen. Bernie Sanders recently about energy policy. Listening to his stump speeches, I'm reminded of Sen. Patrick Moynihan's wise words "Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but not their own facts."

Sanders' approach might seem more environmentally responsible, but his rhetoric is not backed by a single proposal that would move our nation towards a carbon-free future while keeping our lights on – and he demonstrated yet again at Thursday's debate that his energy platform makes the perfect the enemy of the very good. Here's the reality: Contrary to what Sanders says, natural gas is the most viable, abundant and economical solution to meet future electricity needs and New York's clean energy goals.

As New York's Democrats consider their presidential options, let’s establish the facts around how we meet our clean energy goals, do some simple math, and consider the economics.

Natural gas is the most viable ... and economical solution to meet future electricity needs and clean energy goals.

First, what are our clean energy goals? The Clean Power Plan, proposed by President Obama last year, challenges the United States to reduce our carbon emissions by nearly a third by 2030. Every state has a target under this plan, and New York must reduce its carbon pollution from the power sector by 10 percent. It's a tougher goal than you'd think. In fact, New York faces a real challenge to meet it.

How? Let's look at the numbers. First, over the next decade and a half, demand for power is projected to increase by 14 percent. Second, New York's James A. FitzPatrick nuclear energy plant in Oswego will close in 2017, eliminating enough carbon-free power from the grid to serve 650,000 homes. And Gov. Andrew Cuomo wants to close New York's three remaining coal plants by 2020, which is notable in terms of reducing carbon pollution but also removes the energy needed to power 416,000 homes every year.

What does this mean? Research conducted as part of a broader study underway by the Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA) has found that New York will face a drastic energy shortfall of 29 million megawatt hours of electricity, or the equivalent of lights out for 2.4 million New York homes.

How do we make up this energy shortfall while also meeting clean energy goals? Renewables certainly must play a part, but by themselves they are not nearly enough. To fill the 21 percent deficit in the power sector alone, New York would need 100,000 acres of solar panels – or an area six times the size of Albany.

Sanders says he wants a clean energy future, yet he rejects the best method for producing cleaner burning local natural gas and has no plan to replace the carbon-free power from the Indian Point nuclear energy facility – which supplies New York City with 25 percent of its electricity. He only wants investments in solar and wind, which while promising in the future, does not produce energy when the sun doesn't shine and the wind
doesn't blow. In fact, Sanders' own campaign website doesn't mention how we will power New York, and for that matter, the country, while waiting for his clean-energy utopia.

It's time for a fact-based conversation on New York's energy needs. And contrary to what Sanders says, natural gas is the most viable, abundant and economical solution to meet future electricity needs and the carbon emission reduction targets. Bottlenecks in New York's approval process are holding up critical natural gas projects, such as the Constitution pipeline and Access Northeast - projects that will help New York meet their clean energy needs.

Fully two thirds of New York's clean energy requirements could be met by using natural gas: without it, there is not a realistic scenario for meeting these goals. It's time for New Yorkers to ask Senator Sanders how he plans to keep the lights on.
Pennsylvania’s pipeline infrastructure continues to transport shale’s benefits to more consumers and manufacturers across our state all while strengthening our nation’s security. Yet a recent letter (“Pennsylvania, pursue your happiness unless you live here,” March 17) neglects to mention any of these facts.

The letter’s author — a well-documented anti-gas activist — is correct on one assertion: the overwhelming bipartisan support for developing Pennsylvania’s pipeline network.

State Sen. John Yudichak, D-Plymouth Township, is correct to “promote the installation of gas-transmission pipelines across our state” because, as the senator said in a recent Citizens’ Voice article (Feb. 28), “We can grow the natural gas industry in a responsible way.”

Sen. Yudichak is absolutely right. As the local natural gas industry moves forward with the safe build-out and modernization of Pennsylvania’s pipeline network, consumers and manufacturers across are benefitting in the form of lower energy costs. We’re regaining a competitive advantage and reshoring American jobs once lost abroad, making for a stronger, more united nation. The industry supports the safe and efficient transport of our natural gas to market and believes strongly in working with all stakeholders - as underscored through its participation in the Pipeline Infrastructure Task Force - to attain this goal.

As our nation moves forward, we must all protect our environment and find ways to become more energy-efficient. Pennsylvania is nicknamed the Keystone State for being an integral part of our nation’s commerce. Providing natural gas to the other parts of our nation is not possible if it is cut off at its source. And let’s not forget the tens of thousands of good-paying jobs supported locally by development of these important infrastructure projects, which according to Dennis Martire of the Laborers’ International Union of North America, are a “lifeline to family-supporting jobs.”

It’s absolutely critical we continue the build-out of midstream infrastructure to enable more consumer and regional manufacturer access to energy savings. Expanding and modernizing our pipeline infrastructure will directly benefit local communities, boost Pennsylvania’s economy, and help make America more energy secure.

Chris Borton

Forty Fort
Constitution Pipeline Vital Energy Project for All New Yorkers

Armand E. Sabitoni, February 17, 2016
General Secretary-Treasurer & New England Regional Manager, Laborers’ International Union of North America

The Constitution Pipeline project is a vital one for all New Yorkers. It will deliver inexpensive, environmentally natural gas where needed and create jobs.

Our nation’s desire for cleaner energy and historically low prices have fueled the unprecedented popularity of natural gas. Clean-burning natural gas is now responsible for one-third of our nation’s electric generation and heats about half of all U.S. homes – and those numbers continue to grow.

That is why it is imperative for Gov. Andrew Cuomo and the state Department of Environmental Conservation to immediately approve the necessary state permits for the Constitution Pipeline project.

While creating nearly 1,400 family-sustaining construction jobs in Broome, Chenango, Delaware and Schoharie counties, this project will also help support an additional 1,000-plus indirect jobs. Hotels, gas stations, grocery stores, restaurants, equipment suppliers and other businesses will undoubtedly be bolstered by the construction of this vital energy project.

Construction of this project will also generate more than $130 million of new payroll to a local workforce in areas that need it the most. Municipalities along the pipeline route will see nearly $13 million in annual tax revenue through increased sales, income and property taxes.

The Constitution Pipeline would also be considered an “open access pipeline,” meaning that cities, towns and public utilities can tap the line to provide residential, commercial and industrial natural gas service. There are homeowners, energy companies and manufacturers that are eagerly awaiting this opportunity.

The ability of this project to create jobs, help our local economies, keep industry here and generate desperately needed tax revenue makes the Constitution Pipeline a win for our local workers, a win for our communities and a win for New York.

Editor’s Note: Take notice of the key points Mr. Sabitoni makes so concisely in this post, particularly with respect to the fact the Constitution Pipeline will be an open access pipeline offering businesses, communities and industry along the way unparalleled new opportunities to develop and expand. This truth, of course, is exactly the opposite of what fractivists have been proclaiming. We thank him for pointing it out.
Constitution Pipeline a vital energy project

By Letters to the editor, February 13, 2016

Our nation’s desire for cleaner energy and historically low prices have fueled the unprecedented popularity of natural gas. Clean-burning natural gas is now responsible for one-third of our nation’s electric generation and heats about half of all U.S. homes – and those numbers continue to grow.

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Armand E. Sabitoni

Laborers’ International Union of North America, Washington, D.C.

General Secretary-Treasurer and New England Regional Manager
Pipeline project’s positive impact

By Letters to the editor, January 14, 2016 at 3:30 AM

As a proud member of Laborers’ Local 157 and a 32-year resident of the Town of Middleburgh, I am writing to express my continued support of the Constitution Pipeline project. This is a pipeline that could be built by a highly skilled, highly trained and safety-conscious Schoharie County workforce.

This pipeline not only represents a $700 million private investment in our state’s energy infrastructure, it also represents some peace of mind for the hardworking men and women of our community. Being a skilled construction laborer in upstate New York is often difficult as we face unpredictable work opportunities and a construction season completely dictated by weather.

The Constitution Pipeline will provide our members with over a year of steady work and the ability to no longer live paycheck to paycheck. It will allow us to properly provide for our families, get caught up on some bills and quite possibly put a little away for a rainy day.

Our work on this project may allow for a more reliable family car, dance lessons for our daughters or the opportunity for our sons to play travel baseball. I am sure these may sound like simple things, but these simple things have become luxuries for many of us.

I know what this project means for our families and our communities and felt it was time to shed some light on the positive, real-world impacts these types of projects can have.

Josh Shaul
Middleburgh

SEPTEMBER 4, 2015

Our region’s building trade and construction unions have unquestionably established themselves as a critical shale industry supply chain partner.

From infrastructure development to power generation construction projects, shale development is creating “family-supporting pay and good benefits” as well as “long-term middle-class job opportunities” for the region’s talented and hardworking union and building trades.

And top labor unions leaders agree: Harrisburg needs to focus on commonsense policies that ensure we maximize these middle-class benefits and encourage job growth.

Here’s what they’re saying about shale development, which is a powerful “economic engine” for the Commonwealth and working-class families:

**International Union of Operating Engineers Local 66 – Jim Kunz, Business Manager**

(Post-Gazette op-ed, 7/27/15)

- “The natural-gas industry has been a godsend, helping to boost jobs with family-supporting pay and good benefits.”
- “Our hardworking and proud union members are very fortunate for the opportunities afforded by shale as well as the manufacturing and consumer-savings benefits tied to this historic energy revolution.”
- “When we needed jobs most – during a generational crisis — shale delivered.”
- “Shale development across Appalachia has created more than 45,000 good-paying union jobs over the past several years.”
- “Political agendas and differences aside, there could not be a worse time for an excessively higher energy tax.”

**Laborers’ International Union of North America – Dennis Martire, Vice President**

(Delaware County Times op-ed, 7/19/15)

- “Across Pa., development of the shale industry has become a new economic engine for our state.”
• “New [shale] projects generate the kind of jobs that put our state back to work — good family-wage jobs that represent the economic future for many communities across Pa.”

• “These projects are not just pipelines. They are also a lifeline to family-supporting jobs.”

• “Only sound governmental policies will encourage the industry to continue to invest and produce at consistent levels that are vital to local communities, and which create long-term middle-class job opportunities.”

North America’s Building Trades Unions – Sean McGarvey, President (Huffington Post, 6/1/15)

• “Our leaders must continue to support domestic energy exploration, which is proving our nation’s strongest job-growth engine.”

• “In the Marcellus Shale domestic energy production created more than 45,000 construction jobs from 2008 to 2013 — a period when the U.S. construction market was mired in a deep depression.”

• “From 2008 to 2013, construction workers in the Marcellus Shale region logged over 72 million hours of direct and indirect construction labor on projects related to the region’s natural gas development.”

• “The economic impact of the 72 million work hours created through Marcellus Shale development is $2.7 billion.”

• “American domestic energy development enables [our union] to provide structured career-training opportunities in the skilled trades to historically neglected populations, including urban young people, women, communities of color and our nation’s military veterans.”

Builders Guild of Western Pa. – Jason Fincke, Executive Director (Tribune-Review op-ed, 8/4/15)

• “For many of the region’s 17 building trades unions — all represented by the Builders Guild of Western Pa. — shale has presented an opportunity for good jobs that pay family-supporting wages. And for the commonwealth’s economy — especially the small businesses still struggling to recover from the Great Recession — locally produced natural resources have been a driving force behind our region’s growth.”

• “Shale development’s economic benefits and gains are now uncertain should energy taxes be increased to the point where, according to the Independent Fiscal Office, Pennsylvania would become the ‘highest taxed state.’”

• “All families are realizing shale’s benefits through lower-cost energy and community improvements funded by natural gas impact taxes. Since 2012, our state’s impact tax has generated more than $850 million for all 67 counties — including $58 million for Washington County and its municipal governments.”

• “While shale has delivered enormous opportunity for our region, efforts to pass significantly higher energy taxes could threaten this progress.”

• “Harrisburg must focus on policies that encourage infrastructure development using local labor, small business growth and manufacturing — not significantly higher energy taxes that could slam the door on shale’s clear benefits.”

Become a United Shale Advocate today and join the thousands of fellow Pennsylvanians strongly urging Harrisburg to focus on creating jobs, not higher energy taxes.
Why LIUNA Supports Mariner East Pipeline Project

July 22, 2015, By Dennis L. Martire, Vice President and Mid-Atlantic Regional Manager of the Laborers’ International Union of North America

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania - Across Pennsylvania, development of the shale industry has become a new economic engine for our state, supporting energy infrastructure projects that have brought new opportunity to thousands of residents, and increased the energy independence of our entire country. Increasingly, new pipeline projects are delivering both short-term employment benefits from construction, and long-term economic benefits from increased access to affordable natural gas and natural gas liquids.

These new projects generate the kind of jobs that put our state back to work - good family-wage jobs that represent the economic future for many communities across Pennsylvania. For the more than 25,000 members of the Laborers’ International Union of North America in Pennsylvania, and thousands of other workers across our state, these projects are not just pipelines. They are also a lifeline to family-supporting jobs.

LIUNA members are involved in many aspects of the production and transmission of natural gas liquids. Last year, LIUNA members in Pennsylvania worked over 2.4 million hours on pipeline construction and maintenance. All told, we worked more than 15 million hours safely building pipelines across the United States last year.

We know these pipelines, such as the Mariner East 2 project, will bring immense new economic activity to our state. That project alone is estimated to have a total economic impact of more than $4 billion, creating more than 30,000 direct and indirect jobs, including more than 13,000 jobs during construction.

The Mariner East 2 pipeline will meet or exceed all required safety guidelines and be constructed in accordance with state and federal standards. Construction will include state-of-the-art X-ray inspection of every weld that joins the sections of each pipe together.

Members of our trade take pride in doing this work. We have been trained to do it right, and we know how to build and leave behind a site better than the way we found it. We live in these communities too, and we are committed to building pipelines with minimal disruption or impact to landowners.

We also know that these projects will generate significant new tax revenues for our state, as well as new economic activity for local hotels, local restaurants, and local businesses.

Speaking of taxes, Gov. Tom Wolf’s proposed natural gas severance tax proposal has been the subject of much discussion and debate. LIUNA is a committed partner with the shale industry and we believe we need policies that support this new and growing industry. Only sound governmental policies will encourage the
industry to continue to invest and produce at consistent levels that are vital to local communities, and which create long-term middle-class job opportunities. We also understand the severe budget challenges facing Pennsylvania, as the state seeks ways to fund quality schools and vital transportation projects, and secure pension funding for hard-working state residents.

Contrary to some media reports, our union is not necessarily opposed to any new tax whatsoever on natural gas production. We do, however, have significant concerns about any new natural gas tax that could have a negative impact on employment in the industry. We have already seen a reduction in pipeline man-hours over the past two years related to falling natural gas prices. If we excessively tax the shale industry, we risk hurting employers, workers and communities across the state.

People often refer to construction jobs as temporary, but that's the nature of the business. One job finishes, and you move on to the next project. The building trades still provide a great living for millions of workers. Mariner East 2 is exactly the sort of project, funded entirely with private money, that supports working families with good wages, quality benefits and a promising future.

*The working men and women of LIUNA are eager to put our skills and training to work safely building our energy future. Let's keep Pennsylvania moving forward!*
March 26, 2015

Underground pipelines are the safest mode to transport energy, according to federal statistics. New projects - like the Mariner East -- will actually improve and repair an existing pipeline. Pipelines built or repurposed today are state-of-the art. They are constructed from superior materials with continual remote monitoring and automatic safety shut-off technology.

In addition, I know we can build this pipeline without sacrificing our safety or the environment, because it will be built by skilled workers like myself. I am a member of LIUNA, the Laborers' International Union of North America, an organization with more than a century of experience safely building pipelines in virtually every state and province in the U.S. and Canada.

My union and the other trades who will help build this pipeline have pipeline-specific instruction and courses to ensure that construction is safe for workers, property owners, and the environment.

I welcome the conversation and hope we will soon get to work on this project.

RON TOMASETTI, Laborers' International Union of North America, Local 158 Business Manager, Lower Paxton
Union workers show support for pipeline

By Jon Lloyd, Staff Writer, March 17, 2015

On Monday, members of the Laborers’ International Union of North America (LIUNA) showed their support of Dakota Access’ proposed pipeline across Iowa at a news conference in Des Moines and delivered more than 400 letters of support to the Iowa Utilities Board (IUB).

In January, Dakota Access, a subsidiary of Energy Transfer Partners, filed an application for a hazardous liquid pipeline permit with the IUB, which has received hundreds of letters of both support and opposition to the proposed pipeline, which would be buried under about 340 miles of Iowa land on its route from the Bakken oil fields in North Dakota to a terminal hub in Illinois. Crossing 18 Iowa counties, it would go underneath about 25 miles in Boone County and carry up to 570,000 barrels of crude oil daily.

The union workers said in a statement that the pipeline, which would have a 30-inch diameter and has been dubbed the “Bakken pipeline,” would mean “thousands of family-supporting jobs for Iowa laborers.”

Anthony Wilkerson, a pipeline worker and shop steward with LIUNA Local 353, said after joining the union, his first job was working on a pipeline.

“If it wasn’t for the pipeline jobs, I wouldn’t have things I have now,” he said. “My family would be living paycheck to paycheck and I wouldn’t have a new home or a reliable vehicle. We are now able to put money aside for my kids’ college.”

Local 353 member Pamela Gilliam said she used to work at a hotel “making $8 an hour before I joined the union pipeline training classes. I’m trained in safe pipeline construction, and I’m ready to go to work. I need this job for security - financial, physical and emotional. Being able to provide for my family and put food on the table is what is most important to me.”

LIUNA representative Richie Schmidt said, “A vast majority of workers on this project will be local. When local workers get hired on local infrastructure projects, it benefits the economy of the entire community.”

According to union regulations, to qualify for pipeline work, workers must have at least 200 hours in the last two years or 400 hours in the last four years of work on pipeline projects. Also, they can complete a comprehensive, intensive 80-hour training course and be evaluated by an independent, accredited expert in pipeline construction.

In November, Strategic Economics Group released its 78-page economic analysis, which stated the pipeline could generate near $1.1 billion in Iowa’s economy over a two-year construction period. Iowa State University economist Dave Swenson has publicly expressed doubt about SEG’s economic projections.
Dakota Access is seeking landowners’ permission for rights of easement on their property, 150 feet wide during construction and 50 feet after completion. If landowners refuse, the company can invoke eminent domain, or condemnation, according to state law.

Last week, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) received from Dakota Access applications for sovereign lands and floodplain permits, according to Todd Rozendaal, a right of way agent in DNR’s Land and Waters Bureau property management section. Before Dakota Access can being any work on, above or under state-owned lands and waters, it must secure both the sovereign land and floodplain permits, as required by state law. The pipeline’s route is also subject to scrutiny by the DNR’s endangered species coordinator to see if it would impact any threatened or endangered species.

Rozendaal said the 145 pages of applications for the sovereign lands and floodplain permits would also be reviewed by the DNR’s plants, fisheries and wildlife departments.

“They will review and make comments,” he said, adding that copies are also sent to Seth Moore, sovereign lands/environmental review program coordinator.

The pipeline’s proposed route in Iowa would cross four areas under DNR jurisdiction that require sovereign lands permits, one for each area. Those areas are the Big Sioux River in upper northwest Iowa, the Big Sioux Wildlife Area and the Des Moines and Mississippi Rivers. In Boone County, the pipeline company would need a floodplain permit to cross the Des Moines River near the county’s central northern border.

Rozendaal said it could take up to six weeks for the floodplain permits to be reviewed. Sovereign lands permits can be reviewed a little quicker, he said.
Harrisburg, PA – A new economic impact study released today on Sunoco Logistics’ Mariner East projects is welcome news for LIUNA pipeline workers who are ready to build this critical energy infrastructure. The Mariner East projects are designed to provide needed pipeline infrastructure to transport ethane, propane, and other petroleum products from western Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia to markets in and around Philadelphia and beyond.

The study, released by Philadelphia-based Econsult Solutions and commissioned by Sunoco Logistics, forecasts that the projects will put nearly 14,000 men and women to work in construction careers and that $4.2 billion will be added to Pennsylvania’s economy.

“LIUNA members are trained and ready to build the Mariner East pipelines,” said Tony Seiwell, business manager for the Eastern Pennsylvania Laborers’ District Council, which represents thousands of working men and women across the state. “As residents of Pennsylvania, our members also welcome the economic benefits, tax revenue and affordable energy the pipelines will bring to the state. The Mariner East pipelines will be a lifeline to good union jobs with family-supporting pay.”

The Mariner East projects will also increase the locally available domestic supply of propane, meeting both the residential need for propane and the commercial need for propane and other natural gas liquids as inputs to support regional manufacturing.

“LIUNA workers, like all Pennsylvanians, are concerned about affordable energy,” said LIUNA Vice-President and Mid-Atlantic Regional Manager Dennis Martire. “Mariner East is an opportunity for Pennsylvania to make use of its own domestic resources, create thousands of family-wage jobs, and build our energy future.”

Martire noted that the men and women who would build Mariner East live in the communities the pipelines will pass through. He said LIUNA members believe it’s important to address any local concerns that have been raised, and are confident that it can be built and operated safely. In just the last year, LIUNA members worked more than 15 million hours safely building pipelines across the United States.
Laborers set to put skills to work on gas pipeline

By Dan Husted, December 14, 2014

The construction of new, clean energy infrastructure that will carry natural gas has spurred considerable debate in our region. **Many members of Laborers International Union of North America (LIUNA) Local 1075 have attended open houses, meetings and town halls hosted by state legislators and local officials.**

We've been engaged and have been sharing our own pipeline construction story: If the Rover Pipeline is approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, **highly skilled LIUNA members are ready to build this vital piece of infrastructure.**

This $4.3 billion investment will not only bring in out-of-state money to our communities, but it will employ hundreds of laborers from across Michigan.

**LIUNA members are involved in many aspects of the production and transmission of natural gas.** We prepare and repair sites; we strengthen and repair roads; we build feeder and mainline pipelines; we build processing and compression plants, and we maintain those plants under standards designed to protect the workers and the people who live in surrounding communities. Last year, **LIUNA members in Michigan worked over one million hours on pipeline construction and maintenance.**

The Michigan Laborers' Training & Apprenticeship Institute has built a reputation as one of the safest and most productive facilities in the nation, with more certified instructors than any other training center.

The institute has certified over 650 members in pipeline construction safety & technology under U.S. Department of Transportation standards. **We pride ourselves on having the most educated, prepared, safe and highly skilled workforce in the industry.**

Infrastructure projects -- including those that act as conduits for clean energy -- mean job opportunities, new revenue for local governments and economic security for workers and families. But projects such as the Rover natural gas pipeline often draw controversy and frequently devolve into heated exchanges of talking points and rhetoric rather than meaningful discussions of real-world impacts. Each project should be evaluated on its own merits.

This project would mean that **Laborers that live right here in Genesee have a real opportunity to be back at work. Now that's worth talking about.**

-- Dan Husted is business manager of Laborers International Union of North America Local 1075, which represents over 600 men and women predominantly in the construction industry.
Kinder Morgan plans meetings to quell pipeline opposition

August 9, 2015

SALEM, N.H. – The company pushing a natural gas pipeline for sections of Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire will make its case during another round of public meetings next month.

Kinder Morgan has scheduled five informational sessions for New Hampshire, including one set for Sept. 17 in Salem.

“This is an opportunity for people who are interested in learning more about NED (Northeast Energy District) to come and ask project team members questions and get the facts about NED,” said Allen Fore, vice president of public affairs for Kinder Morgan.

“We look forward to maintaining and advancing a constructive dialogue with the every local community and all interested stakeholders.”

Earlier this month the project recently launched a New Hampshire-specific website to help Granite Staters learn more about the project and the economic benefits it will bring to local homes and businesses.

“We are committed to this project and to working with every community to find common sense solutions to make this project better,” said Fore. “NED is a New Hampshire energy solution that will help foster economic growth, create jobs, and help the region continue to reduce its carbon footprint. We look forward to continuing our work on this critical project in an open and transparent fashion.”

The company wants to build a $3.3 billion pipeline stretching from Pennsylvania to Dracut to deliver natural gas to homes and businesses in the region.

Proponents of the pipeline point to New England's spike in energy rates during recent years, especially in the winter. Unions, particularly the Laborers International Union of North America, which has a standing agreement with the Pipeline Contractors Association, say the pipeline's construction will create lucrative jobs for the region.

Opponents cite safety, disruption of wetlands and conservation lands and, in many cases, damage to their property as reasons the project should not go forward. Critics also claim there is no need for a pipeline as large as the one Kinder Morgan proposes, unless the company plans to ship the gas overseas.

The Sept. 17 "informational" open house will be held at Rockingham Park, 79 Rockingham Park Blvd., Salem, from 6 to 8 p.m.

Additional meetings will be held in New Ipswich, Fitzwilliam, Milford and Merrimack. All meetings will be 6 to 8 p.m.

For more information regarding the dates and locations of the open houses or to get more information on NED go to energymattersnh.com.
The Davis-Bacon Act and Prevailing Wage Laws

Our country is about more than just low wage jobs. What makes America different is that it's about the chance to get ahead and prosper. Davis-Bacon and state and local laws establishing a wage floor on construction projects and are a tried and true way to protect paychecks, defend taxpayers and create jobs.

Davis-Bacon and prevailing wage laws protect paychecks and allow working people to get ahead and prosper.

- Davis-Bacon and prevailing wage laws ensure that taxpayer-funded projects pay local prevailing wages and benefits.
- Davis-Bacon prevents government spending from driving down local wages and living standards.
- Corporate interests and their advocates in Congress and in state governments who are working to repeal or weaken Davis-Bacon laws are really out to cut workers’ paychecks and pocket the pay-cuts as profits.

Davis-Bacon and prevailing wage laws are good for the community not just union workers.

- Where unions are strong, the prevailing wage is likely to be close to what local union workers make. Where unions are not strong, the prevailing wage is likely to be lower than what local union workers earn.
- Without prevailing wage laws, pay and benefits for all construction work is driven down as contractors compete for work based on who pays the lowest possible wage and provides the least possible benefits.
- Corporations do not pass the money they save from cuts in labor costs on to taxpayers. In fact, when corporations block prevailing wage laws they destroy jobs and cost taxpayers.

The research is clear: prevailing wage laws don’t increase costs for taxpayers.

- A study of school construction costs in Great Plains states showed that prevailing wage laws do not raise construction costs – but repealing such laws hurt taxpayers and workers. After Kansas’ prevailing wage law was repealed, wages fell 11 percent and jobsite injuries rose 19 percent, according to the study prepared for the Kansas Senate.
- Highway construction costs are actually higher when workers are paid less, according to an analysis of Federal Highway Administration data by the Construction Labor Research Council.
- Cost overruns are more likely without prevailing wage laws. In Utah, a repeal of the state prevailing wage law was followed by a tripling of cost overruns, which was attributed to lower productivity and a less skilled workforce.
What is the Cadillac Tax?

The "Cadillac Tax" is a 40% non-deductible excise tax on the value of employer-sponsored health coverage that exceeds certain benefit thresholds – initially, $10,200 for self-only coverage and $27,500 for family coverage in 2018. While the name may imply the 40% tax applies to a few individuals with luxury or overly generous health coverage, the truth is it extends much further. 175 million Americans – including retirees, low- and moderate-income families, public sector employees, small businesses and the self-employed – currently depend on employer-sponsored health coverage and they are all at risk.

- The 40% tax will impact ALL Americans with employer-sponsored health coverage. Because the tax is indexed to the consumer price index, which is lower than health care inflation, every year an increasing number of health plans will be subject to the tax. In fact, 82 percent of employers expect their plans will be affected by the tax within the first five years of implementation.

- The 40% tax penalizes employers for many factors that are out of their control. The tax unfairly targets employers that have a higher number of workers with chronic or serious diseases or those with larger families. Employers with locations in high-cost areas or in specific industries, such as manufacturing or law enforcement, are also unequally affected by the 40% tax.

- The 40% tax applies not only to what the employers pay for their employees’ health coverage, but also to the contributions by employees themselves. The tax applies to a number of benefits that help control costs including on-site medical clinics, certain wellness and employee assistance plans, health savings account contributions, health reimbursement arrangements, flexible spending accounts, and other pre-tax health benefits. This will cause many plans to hit the tax threshold earlier than expected.

- The 40% tax must be repealed now. Employers are already cutting benefits and changing plans to avoid the tax. A recent study found employers are already increasing deductibles and implementing other cost-sharing programs right now, in 2015, to avoid being on a trajectory to trigger the tax when it goes into effect in 2018.

- A bipartisan majority in Congress supports repealing the 40% tax. 272 Members of the House and 32 Senators have co-sponsored bipartisan legislation to repeal the tax.

The Alliance to Fight the 40 is a broad-based coalition comprised of public and private sector employer organizations, unions, patient advocates, health care companies, businesses and other stakeholders that support employer-sponsored health coverage. This coverage is the backbone of our health care system and protects over 175 million Americans across the United States. The Alliance seeks to repeal the 40% tax on employee health benefits to ensure that employer-sponsored coverage remains an effective and affordable option for working Americans and their families.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: communications@liuna.org or 202-942-2246

“Cadillac Tax” Proposal in President’s 2017 Budget Robs Working People

Washington, DC (February 6, 2016) – Terry O’Sullivan, General President of LIUNA - the Laborers’ International Union of North America - today made the following statement regarding reports of the President’s proposed modification to the health benefits tax, also known as the “Cadillac Tax,” in the Fiscal Year 2017 budget:

The President has at last recognized that the tax on health care plans known as the “Cadillac Tax” is flawed. However, there is no tweaking the tax to make it fair and reasonable, or to avoid the disastrous impacts it will have on the health care of working men and women. It needs to be repealed, and anything other than full repeal robs working people of the health care they have earned.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: (202) 942-2246 or communications@liuna.org

President’s Proposal on “Cadillac Tax”

Washington, DC (February 4, 2016) – Terry O’Sullivan, General President of LIUNA - the Laborers’ International Union of North America - today made the following statement regarding reports of the President’s proposed modification to the health benefits tax, also known as the “Cadillac Tax”:

The President has at last recognized that the tax on health care plans known as the “Cadillac Tax” is flawed. However, there is no tweaking the tax to make it fair and reasonable or to avoid the disastrous impacts it will have on the health care of working men and women. It needs to be repealed and anything other than full repeal, robs working people of the health care they have earned.

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The half-million members of LIUNA – the Laborers’ International Union of North America – are on the forefront of the construction industry, a powerhouse of workers who are proud to build America.
America's Roads and Bridges Need a Raise

The U.S. highway system marveled the world when it was built as a response to the nation’s security needs. Today it has fallen into disrepair and is stretched beyond capacity to the point where it is no longer functional in many regions. Without the same visionary leadership and national will that created our highway system, America’s ability to compete in the global economy will be crippled.

The U.S. economy is dependent on surface transportation – $1 of every $10 of the gross domestic product is tied to moving goods and people. Yet, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation, 170,000 miles of our roads are in poor condition.

- “Traffic congestion costs commuters and businesses $170 billion a year due to 4 billion hours in delays, the DOT’s chief economist has determined. The cost is growing at twice the rate of the economy, placing a significant drag on competitiveness.
- Motorists pay on average $710 every year for gas they waste due to traffic congestion, which also increases our reliance on foreign oil.

Deteriorating roads are a threat to public safety and to our quality of life.

- According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, roadway conditions are a significant factor in about one-third of traffic fatalities.
- Rush hour has doubled in urban areas from three to six hours. In 1982, Los Angeles was the only urban area in the U.S. where commuters lost 40 or more hours a year to traffic delays. Now, 28 urban areas face those conditions.

Bringing our highways up to par would create more than 1 million jobs a year and leave behind real assets for future generations.

- Long-term, sustainable investment is critical in order to build and maintain safe and efficient transportation systems that will promote our economic competitiveness in the future.
- LIUNA is open to any practical options to address the crisis facing our infrastructure. However, adjusting the gas tax, which funds our Highway Trust Fund and hasn’t been raised since 1993, remains the most realistic, viable and sustainable solution.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: communications@liuna.org or 202-942-2246

President’s Transportation Budget Will Cost Drivers More without Improving Roads

Washington, D.C. (February 9, 2016) – Terry O’Sullivan, General President of LIUNA – the Laborers’ International Union of North America – made the following statement today in response to the transportation proposal in the President’s FY2017 budget:

The President’s final transportation budget is too little, too late, and wrongly focused. Throughout the highway bill debate, LIUNA urged Congress and the President to pass an increase in the gas tax in order to ensure funding for the Highway Trust Fund. The White House refused to support this common-sense approach to our transportation financing needs. It appears that environmental extremists have convinced the President to tax our energy sector through a $10 oil tax in order to pay for clean transportation investment. It is a poor policy proposal that will cost drivers more without actually doing anything to improve the roads they drive on. The proposal also sidesteps the urgent need to provide sustainable investment for all transportation infrastructure rather than stealing from roads and bridges to invest in transit.

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Workers Who Build America Welcome President’s Call for Increased Infrastructure Investment

Statement of Terry O’Sullivan, General President of LIUNA, On President Obama’s Build America Initiative Announcement

Washington, D.C. (January 16, 2015) – Terry O’Sullivan, General President of LIUNA – the Laborers’ International Union of North America – made the following statement today on the announcement of next steps for President Obama’s Build America initiative at the Anacostia River Tunnel Project:

LIUNA members working on the Anacostia River Tunnel project are proud to stand alongside Vice President Biden today as next steps are announced for the Build America Initiative. The setting for the announcement, the construction site of the 24,000 foot-long tunnel project designed to help reduce combined sewer overflows into the Anacostia River, is an example of public investment in infrastructure that has created family-supporting jobs for local workers that benefit the environment and water quality.

LIUNA welcomes the Administration’s efforts to increase investment in infrastructure including the use of private sector resources. From highways and roads, to water and energy infrastructure, our needs are great. However, public-private sector approaches must remain a supplement for public investment, not a substitute. The National Council of State Legislators estimates that only twenty percent of transportation projects can likely be completed via a public-private partnership. Furthermore, we cannot stress enough the importance of ensuring that public-private partnerships are structured in a way that leads to high road job creation rather than a race-to-the-bottom.

LIUNA will continue to urge members of Congress to have the courage and conviction to address the need for long-term investment in America’s crumbling infrastructure through a long-term full investment Highway bill, support for the construction of the Keystone Pipeline as well as other energy infrastructure, and investment in clean and safe water.

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The half-million members of LIUNA – the Laborers’ International Union of North America – are on the forefront of the construction industry, a powerhouse of workers who are proud to build America.
Todd Maisch and Michael Kleinik: Illinois must get serious about transportation needs

May 1, 2016

Asking Illinois taxpayers to pay more to support investments in the roads and bridges they travel on every day is a real challenge, as evidenced by the recent attention given to proposals to increase the state gas tax and to ask drivers to pay for the miles they travel. The state's ongoing budget stalemate is doing nothing to ease taxpayer frustration.

But there is a movement in Springfield we think can start to change the conversation over transportation investment. It starts with making sure the dollars intended to fix our infrastructure actually get spent on those projects.

For far too long in Illinois, that has not been the case. From 2003 to 2015, a whopping $6.4 billion in tax dollars collected for transportation infrastructure were diverted for other purposes. That averages out to more than $500 million each year in dollars paid at the gas pump or through other fees that drivers paid, only to have them sent to fill other holes in the state budget instead of keeping our road and bridge conditions improved.

Ask taxpayers whether they're ready to pay more for our infrastructure, or the lawmakers who represent them to vote for paying more for improvements, and they're likely to say they want to make sure the money being sent to infrastructure gets spent properly first. As co-chairs of the Transportation for Illinois Coalition, we wholeheartedly agree.

We applaud the Illinois House for recently overwhelmingly approving HJRCA 36, an initiative led by Rep. Brandon Phelps and Sen. Bill Haine and championed by dozens of Democrats and Republicans alike. The measure would guarantee the money raised for road and other transportation purposes can only be used that way, creating a "lockbox" for these important infrastructure funds.

The next step is for the Illinois Senate to take up this measure soon. If it is approved by next week, the measure will go to the November ballot — and voters will be able to decide if this strong protection for infrastructure investment is added to the state Constitution.

We have pushed for many years to make our infrastructure a top priority in Springfield and Washington. Illinois is the nation's transportation hub, carrying millions of people to and from work and freight and goods from around the world to their destinations to support our economy. Yet we are facing a crisis in our transportation network's condition that, without an influx of new dollars soon, will result in thousands more miles of roads and many more bridges in unacceptable condition.

We need to get serious about what it will take to fix our infrastructure challenges for the long term, and those will not be easy discussions. In the meantime, we can take a good first step by getting HJRCA 36 approved in the Senate and putting it on the fall ballot to ask voters the key question: Why can't Illinois guarantee every dollar of road and bridge funding goes to fixing our roads and bridges?

Todd Maisch and Michael Kleinik are co-chairs of Transportation for Illinois Coalition. Maisch is president and CEO of the Illinois Chamber of Commerce. Kleinik is executive director of the Chicago Laborers District Council-LMCC.
America’s Water Infrastructure

Across the U.S. our water systems - from sewage overflows and water main breaks to deteriorating dams and levees - are failing because of chronic under-investment.

Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) and Safe Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF)

- Water is an essential resource, yet every day much of it is at risk due to failing systems or aging, inefficient treatment facilities that cannot handle increased demand.
- It is estimated that more than one million miles of water mains are in place in the United States. The conditions of many of these pipes are unknown, as they are buried underground out of sight, and owned and operated by various local entities.
- Some pipes date back to the Civil War era and often are not examined until there is a problem or a water main break.
- These breaks are becoming more common Infrastructure investments though the CWSRF and the DWSRF have stagnated, and without Congressional action the investment shortfall could reach $300 billion in 20 years.

The financial impacts of meeting regulatory requirements are a continuing issue for many communities. In the case of drinking water systems, however, funding has remained static, often requiring localities to put less toward routine maintenance.

Locks, Dams and Levees – Reauthorization of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRDA)

- Often un-recognized, the nation’s interconnected system of rivers and inland waterways are a key components of the national economy.
- This network includes 12,000 miles of commercially navigable channels and over 200 lock chambers.
- Waterways are often the preferred method for moving bulk cargo such as grain and steel, as well as hazardous materials with more than 566 million tons of freight through the inland waterway system annually.
- Unfortunately, many of the locks are too small for modern barges, and are susceptible to closures, forcing barges to stop more often to allow for scheduled and unscheduled maintenance.
- These delays have increased significantly since the 1990s, which costs industry and consumers hundreds of millions of dollars annually. The state of our nation’s dams is putting lives at risk as well as courting financial catastrophe in many communities.
- There are 13,991 high-hazard dams nationwide that pose a significant risk to nearby life and property. Rehabilitating the dams most in need of repair would require a $57 billion investment.
- Our nation’s investment in dams is nearly $7.5 billion short of what’s needed to ensure they remain safe and productive over the next five years.

LIUNA supports the reauthorization of the 2016 Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) which would provide the necessary funding to address these critical infrastructure needs in addition to creating tens of thousands of good jobs.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: communications@liuna.org or 202-942-2246

Laborers’ Union and ARCSA Sign Historic Agreement for Safe Water Management

Washington, D.C. (April 19, 2016) – Terry O’Sullivan, General President of LIUNA – the Laborers’ International Union of North America – made the following statement today on the signing of an agreement between LIUNA and the American Rainwater Catchment Systems Association (ARCSA), the preeminent national education and technical organization offering the accreditation and recognized ANSI standards for rainwater catchment and storm water harvesting:

“The Memorandum of Understanding is the start of a historic partnership between the half-million hard working men and women of LIUNA, who build both the U.S. and Canada, and ARCSA, an organization known for their expertise in helping states and localities harvest water from storm water and rainwater. LIUNA training centers across North America will deliver the ARCSA Accredited Professional Training for contractors and LIUNA members.

The agreement provides a framework for LIUNA members to train as qualified ARCSA rainwater and storm water harvesting system installers; fulfilling a vital need as the nation faces cycles of drought and extreme rainfall events, as well as, drinking water shortages.

LIUNA is proud to be on the forefront with ARCSA in helping develop eco-friendly systems to manage storm water and harvest safe drinking water. This agreement will also work towards a cooperative relationship with the United Association and the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials.”

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The half-million members of LIUNA – the Laborers’ International Union of North America – are on the forefront of the construction industry, a powerhouse of workers who are proud to build the U.S. and Canada.
Local union seeks Flint workers to train for water line replacement

By Molly Young | June 23, 2016

FLINT, MI -- A local union is looking for Flint residents they can train to replace lead service lines – training the union says could lead to a career with benefits, a pension and hourly wages between $17 to $25.

"What we hope to do is bring them in as a member and show them good living wages -- good benefits. It doesn't get any better than that," said Lynn Coleman, Director of the Michigan Laborers' Training and Apprenticeship Institute, which trains laborers accepted into Laborers Local Union 1075.

"So, if we can help out the City of Flint, help out the residents of the City of Flint with a good job and good benefits – that's all we can hope for," Coleman said. The search for applicants began in April, and 25 Flint residents have already completed the four-week apprenticeship program, which is tailored to create workers with specialized training in lead pipe removal.

Of those 25 who have completed the program, 21 are already working on jobs, but they're not related to lead pipe removal since the city rejected several bids for the job. That means there could be a need for many more workers than the estimated 40 they originally anticipated, Coleman said. And, that's the best part about the program, said Sen. Jim Ananich. It's not so specific to lead pipe removal that the training can't be used for other things.

"The beautiful thing is, its not as if they're going to work on this and then when the pipes are done, that they're just out of work. They can go work anywhere in the world and have some of the best training around, so it's really exciting to help improve the lives of 50 people – if not more," Ananich said.

The free program puts trainees on track to earn their journeyman's card, a license that requires much more time and classroom hours, but that is likely to earn a worker more money. All the courses and jobs included in this program count toward that certification, Coleman said.

People who have gone through the program are making $17 to $25 an hour, depending on their skills and the job, according to Coleman. Courses include 80 hours of classroom and hands-on training in areas like asbestos removal, job readiness and life skills, general construction and pipelaying, but they may be tailored based on industry needs at the time.

Participants learn skill and knowledge that allows them to safely work in excavations, to set grade, to lay pipe and to connect service lines for residential or commercial settings. As of Thursday, June 23, officials said 52 Flint residents either completed the program or were invited to attend an upcoming session.

"We anticipated originally that we would need around 40 people, but we've already exceeded that," Coleman said, adding that there is no way to predict demand for laborers.

The program is free, and those who complete it receive a stipend to cover commuting and other expenses. Coleman says there's no telling how long they'll be looking for workers – it all depends on the demand – but, anyone interested in applying should contact Michigan Works.

Michigan Works screens the applications and then sends a list of qualified applicants to Laborers Local 1075, located at the corner of North Dort Highway and East Stanley Road in Genesee Township, for hiring interviews.
New Jersey water system upgrades could cost $40 billion

BY PHIL GREGORY, MAY 20, 2016

It's not just lead in New Jersey's aging water pipes that is causing concern about the state's water infrastructure.

Bob Briant, with the Utility and Transportation Contractors Association, said it's imperative that stormwater systems be upgraded. They're connected to sewage treatment plants. When it rains, Briant said, they can overflow, sending sewage into rivers.

It would cost about $40 billion to make all the needed infrastructure improvements to prevent that from happening, Briant said Thursday during a news conference in Trenton.

"I think this year we're going to get a little more funds than usual, but this is going to be a long effort. This is going to be an effort that will take some revenue," he said. "We just don't have it in the federal general fund to do this."

Joe McNamara with the Laborers International Union is urging Congress to prioritize investment in water system upgrades.

"So that states and local municipalities can make the improvements that we need at this level to take care of those leaky pipes, to make sure that the sewage overflow is removed from the water system so we stop polluting our rivers and our streams," he said.
California Water Project Is the Right Answer

California needs more than Sen. Feinstein’s sympathy. We need action now.

April 26, 2016 2:20 p.m. ET

Sen. Dianne Feinstein is wrong (Letters, April 16) and Allysia Finley is right (Cross Country, April 9) about the Cadiz water project that would deliver 50,000 acre feet of water to parched communities in Southern California. That’s enough to meet the annual residential needs of 100,000 families at no public cost. Without Cadiz, all of that water is lost to evaporation.

Sen. Feinstein has also been instrumental in blocking Senate consideration of House legislation (H.R. 2898) that would have allowed us this year to capture and store hundreds of thousands of acre feet of winter runoff that was instead lost to the ocean.

Her charge that Cadiz is attempting to “evade environmental review” by using an existing railroad right of way is absurd. The project and the pipeline route were publicly reviewed, approved and sustained at trial during California’s stringent environmental review process. The law specifically encourages ancillary use of the rights of way, and the railroad itself has affirmed this use.

California needs more than Sen. Feinstein’s sympathy. We need action now. No one is asking her to lead these efforts that are supported by so many water districts, labor groups, chambers of commerce and a bipartisan coalition in Congress. All she needs to do is get out of the way. Please.

Rep. Tom McClintock (R., Calif.)
Roseville, Calif.

California needs more water solutions, not fewer. It’s time to let go of outdated information and help Southern California access this urgently needed, thoroughly reviewed project.

Terry O’Sullivan
General President
Laborers’ International Union of North America
Washington
America deserves an A-plus water infrastructure

By Terry O’Sullivan, March 24, 2016, 01:00 pm

Our country must do better than nearly failing when it comes to something so vital and fundamental as water. Yet a D is our nation’s water infrastructure grade from the American Society of Civil Engineers. It has taken the lead contamination scandal in Flint to focus the attention of Congress and elected officials across the nation, but Flint is only the tip of an iceberg.

News reports now say as many as 2,000 water systems across the country may have excessive lead levels, while as many as 10 million homes receive water through lead pipes. Across the nation, many pipes are more than 100 years old, some dating to the Civil War era, posing drinking water risks. Each year, according to the Civil Engineers, there are 240,000 water main breaks. Faulty pipes result in the leakage of 900 billion gallons of wastewater a year, helping to make 28 percent of waterways unfit for human recreation and 18 percent unfit for consumption. According to the ASCE, the cost to fix our nation’s neglect of water resources is now $1.7 trillion – and rising.

From drinking water contamination, to water scarcity that has parched much of California’s farmland, to ports and waterways that can no longer accommodate commerce, the water crisis is one of the most critical issues facing the U.S. As Flint shows, the crisis raises moral questions, but there are major economic costs as well. For example, in just 2015 alone, the water crisis cost California nearly $3 billion in commerce and 21,000 jobs, according to the University of California – Davis. In Flint alone, more than $1 billion will be needed to replace pipes. Across the country, neglect of inland waterways and the associated stunting of water transportation activity could hit the economy with the loss of 738,000 jobs by 2020, a nearly $750 billion hit to the economy, according to the Civil Engineers.

America can do better than a D. This year, Congress is likely to consider a number of water infrastructure measures ranging from reauthorization of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act to bills aimed at alleviating the drought in the West and efforts to increase funding for clean and safe drinking water. But we must caution Congress against ‘robbing Peter to pay Paul.’ For the sake of our children in every community, the drinking water crisis must receive additional, significant and dedicated resources above and apart from WRRDA. That piece of legislation is simply not capable of addressing the crisis, and attempting to use it for that purpose will only strain other critical water resources.

When parents in Flint first expressed alarm about lead levels in drinking water and the documented impact the chemical has on child development, some were told not to worry. “It’s just a few IQ points,” one mother recounted being told by a nurse.

Just as flippant responses to the Flint water crisis are repulsive, so too will be excuses by Congress for failing to act. The challenge is enormous, but the rewards can be equally great. The men and women of LIUNA are ready to fight to protect lives and we’re ready to get to work doing our job to rebuild America’s neglected water infrastructure. Now it’s up to Congress and elected officials at every level to do their jobs to ensure our country and our people have what they deserve: an A-plus water infrastructure.

O’Sullivan is General President of the Laborers’ International Union of North America, which represents a half-million men and women predominantly in the construction industry.
Protecting Pensions

Millions of Americans, including tens of thousands of LIUNA members and spouses, depend on multiemployer pension trust funds for a pension that pays a monthly retirement benefit for as long as they live. LIUNA is committed to preserving these pension funds for the future so that members can retire in dignity after years of hard work.

LIUNA strongly opposes higher PBGC premiums on pensions

- The Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC), which covers over 10 million workers and retirees in approximately 1,400 collectively bargained pension plans, is on the brink of insolvency. It receives no taxpayer funding and relies on insurance premiums imposed on pension plans.
- PBGC has a projected deficit of more than $50 billion and could face insolvency within the next nine years.
- The Multiemployer Pension Reform Act of 2014 (MPRA) more than doubled the annual premium rate – or tax - that every multiemployer defined benefit pension fund must pay to the PBGC; increasing the rate from $12 per participant in 2014 up to $27 per participant in 2016.
- The PBGC cannot be saved by imposing higher taxes on the pensions of millions of workers.
- The annual premium tax creates an undue burden on pension funds – amounting to millions of dollars per year - in order to shore up failing plans. This tax threatens the benefits promised to current retirees and active participants who will retire in the future.

LIUNA supports more flexibility in plan design and making PBGC coverage voluntary for multiemployer pension funds – especially in the construction industry

- Multiemployer pension funds depend on collectively bargained employer contributions and productive investments.
- After decades of strong growth in pension funds’ finances were greatly harmed by the investment market crash of 2008 and the Great Recession, and are still recovering. Tougher funding standards imposed by law are also increasing the strain.
- To meet these challenges, pension fund trustees need more flexibility to re-design their pension plans to preserve the funds’ ability to pay pensions that cannot be outlived by pensioners and spouses.
One type of new plan design being proposed in Congress is the so-called “composite plan”, a design originally developed by the Retirement Security Commission convened by the National Coordinating Committee for Multiemployer Plans (NCCMP), in which LIUNA actively participated.

LIUNA supports voluntary PBGC coverage particularly in the construction industry where plans are uniquely vulnerable. In construction, contractors must compete with non-union contractors who do not pay pension or health plan costs for their employers. If union contractors lose projects, union workers will lose jobs and wages.

**Current Proposals**

- The Obama administration’s FY 2017 budget proposal calls for an even greater rate increase and requests that Congress give the PBGC the authority to do so. Congress currently sets the premium rates and structure.
- The PBGC’s 2016 MPRA Report informs Congress that it needs $15 billion to keep multiemployer insurance solvent. It proposes a 600+ percent increase in the multiemployer plan rate.
- The report omits key details. Currently, single-employer pension plans pay higher rates. However, in the event that they fail they are guaranteed benefit levels 500% higher than the multiemployer program’s guarantees, which are already inadequate.
- Similar to the administration’s proposal, the report recommends handing this authority to the PBGC, giving it the ability to set higher premium rates, impose additional variable rates, charge higher rates to some plans and reduce the rates for other plans, and impose an "exit fee" on employers who withdraw from multiemployer funds.
- There is a revised version of the composite plan now floating around on Capitol Hill but without more detail we can’t be sure that it meets the criteria for plan design flexibility and we simply cannot accept a substandard proposal.
- If plan design flexibility is not granted soon, defined *contribution* plan designs will become the new standard in the construction industry—a prospect bad for everyone.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: communications@liuna.org or 202-942-2246

President’s Budget Raids Pension Plans of Working Class Americans

Washington, D.C. (February 11, 2016) – Terry O’Sullivan, General President of LIUNA – the Laborers’ International Union of North America – made the following proposed increase in Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) premiums for multiemployer plans as part of President Obama’s FY 2017 budget proposal:

The President’s proposed fivefold tax increase on pensions is a raid on the retirement security of working class Americans. The tax will cost multiemployer pension plans sponsored by LIUNA and its affiliated Pension funds millions of dollars more every single year.

LIUNA has been clear in our opposition to past efforts to premium increases; opposing efforts in 2014 to increase premiums from $13 to $26. This increase is much larger and will take money from Laborers’ paychecks that would be better spent shoring up our own pension plans, rather than being diverted to the PBGC, an agency that appears to be doomed in any event.

The President’s plan is ill conceived and will destabilize a pension plan system which has helped millions of Americans retire in prosperity, rather than poverty.

Combined with the 40 percent health benefits or “Cadillac Tax,” which could financially cripple many health care plans, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the President’s aim is to dismantle the private sector defined benefit pension and health care plans which millions of Americans depend on.

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The half-million members of LIUNA – the Laborers’ International Union of North America – are on the forefront of the construction industry, a powerhouse of workers who are proud to build America.
June 23, 2016

The Honorable Thomas E. Perez
Secretary of Labor
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Secretary Perez:

On behalf of the 500,000 members of the Laborers’ International Union of North America (LIUNA), I write to express LIUNA’s strong opposition to proposals to again increase the annual premiums charged to multiemployer pension funds by the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC).

The PBGC annual premium is a pension tax that diverts millions of dollars from LIUNA members’ pension funds every year. That is a lot of money that our pension funds need to pay promised benefits to current retirees and active participants who will retire in the future. In effect, the PBGC is taking money from the pockets of LIUNA members to pay for someone else’s pension, and the Administration is proposing to take a lot more.

The Multiemployer Pension Reform Act of 2014 increased the annual premium rate by more than 100% and indexed the rate for inflation. The annual premium rate was $12 in 2013, and is $27 for 2016. The PBGC’s June 17, 2016 MPRA Report that you transmitted to Congress as the PBGC’s Chair, calls for a 600% or more increase in the multiemployer plan premium rate. The Report compares the current premium rate to the higher single-employer program premium rates, but omits that the single-employer program benefit guarantee levels are 500% higher than the multiemployer program’s guarantees and that Congress has increased the single-employer program rates for revenue reasons unrelated to the PBGC.

Mirroring a proposal in President Obama’s FY 2017 Budget Proposal, the PBGC Report recommends giving the agency premium-setting authority that would include the power to set higher premium rates, impose additional variable premium rates, charge higher rates to some plans and reduce the rates for other plans, and impose an “exit fee” on employers that withdraw from multiemployer funds.

With a projected deficit of more than $50 billion and insolvency looming within nine years, it is not surprising that the PBGC is primarily focused on its own survival.
These proposals may be well-intended to save the agency, but the real world impact will hasten the demise of the multiemployer pension system and deprive millions of workers of the opportunity to earn life-long retirement incomes. I note that the PBGC’s Report begrudgingly concedes that a “poorly designed premium increase may encourage employer withdrawals and accelerate plan insolvency with a resulting cost to plan participants and a need for even larger premiums.”

Contributing employers are already exiting the defined benefit plan system because of contribution rate increases required by the Pension Protection Act’s (PPA) tougher funding standards and other costs, and by concerns about employer withdrawal liability increasing the longer they participate in a pension fund. Construction industry contractors are concerned about their ability to effectively compete for projects against non-union contractors that do not incur pension or health plan costs for their employees. If union contractors lose projects, multiemployer pension and health funds lose collectively bargained contributions and union workers lose jobs and wages.

The Administration’s proposals for PBGC premium increases and exit fees are giving contributing employers a greater incentive to leave multiemployer defined benefit plans, and to do so soon before any of the proposals can be enacted by Congress.

Union members, too, have a limit on the amount of collectively bargained contribution increases they can tolerate. The reality is that pension and health plan contributions offset wages. PPA-required pension contribution increases and health fund contribution increases caused by the Affordable Care Act have adversely affected wage rates for too long. Adding a higher pension tax will make matters much worse.

I also have my doubts that the premium rate increases proposed in the PBGC’s MPRA Report would be the end of it, even if adopted. Projections have a way of being wrong as time goes by. LIUNA supports making PBGC coverage voluntary for multiemployer pension funds, particularly those in the construction industry. Funds opting out of the PBGC coverage would save the money otherwise payable to the PBGC, and they would forego PBGC guaranties in the event of insolvency. This is not a new position. This Union took the same position in 1974 when ERISA was enacted. We are not alone. For example, I am advised that the publication “Pension and Investments” recently editorialized that the PBGC should be shut down. Other commentators have observed that the current multiemployer defined benefit regulatory scheme, including the PBGC coverage and withdrawal liability, is driving labor-management bargaining parties out of defined benefit plans and into less favorable defined contribution plans that are not subject to PBGC or required to impose employer withdrawal liability.
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If the Administration is sincere about wanting to preserve multiemployer pension funds that provide secure, life-long retirement income for pensioners and their surviving spouses, it should forego pension tax increases and support giving fund trustees greater flexibility in designing their benefit programs than allowed under current law. The legal limitations on plan design are preventing trustees from adjusting their plans to meet existential challenges like investment market volatility, low interest rates, inability to attract new contributing employers, and loss of contributing employers and employee groups.

The draft House bill that eventually became the MPRA included changes in law to allow a new type of plan design called a “composite plan” that was intended to give pension fund trustees a new plan design option to meet the challenges mentioned above. LIUNA supported the composite plan concept. However, the composite plan provisions were stripped from the draft bill shortly before it was launched on its way towards passage, with promises that they would be revived in the present Congress. I am told there is a revised version of the composite plan now floating around Capitol Hill, but I am not sure whether this version meets the need for plan design flexibility at this point. I have heard that some in the Administration have been critical of features that are essential for acceptability of any composite plan by trustees and bargaining parties.

If plan design flexibility is not granted soon, defined contribution plan designs will become the standard in the construction industry, and everyone will lose, including the PBGC. Thank you for your consideration.

With kind regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

TERRY O’SULLIVAN
General President

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LIUNA TO PEREZ: NO PBGC PREMIUM INCREASES

PLEASE: LiUNA General President Terry O’Sullivan wrote Labor Secretary Tom Perez Thursday urging the administration not to increase annual PBGC premiums for multiemployer pension funds. The letter comes less than one week after the PBGC issued a report that said the agency needed to raise premiums substantially in order to prevent its multiemployer program from going insolvent. But O’Sullivan noted that the 2014 multiemployer pension reform law already hiked premiums to $27 in 2016, up from $12 in 2013.
Terry O’Sullivan would like to escape from the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp. He means no disrespect to the PBGC, an insurance scheme established under ERISA to take over troubled or failed pension plans and continue the flow of benefits. But with a net deficit of $52.3 billion, the PBGC, by its own estimate, lacks the capital to cover anticipated needs.

“We see it as something that’s broken and cannot be fixed,” says O’Sullivan, 60, a San Francisco native and a member of a local in Charleston, West Virginia, who has run the Laborers’ International Union of North America since 2000. “We believe in solutions, not bailouts,” he says. “If you give us the tools and the flexibility, we can fix our own problems.”

From the start, the relationship between multiemployer plans and the PBGC has been uneasy. Multiemployer funds do not have the same type of default risk as single-employer funds dependent on a corporation. Historically, the PBGC has not stepped in to save multiemployer funds until all their assets have been depleted, and the funds have paid lower premiums than single plans.

The Kline-Miller Multiemployer Pension Reform Act of 2014, which O’Sullivan generally supported, sought unsuccessfully to hike multiemployer premiums from $12 per participant per year to $40. The rate is now $26. O’Sullivan contends that hiking the premium merely punishes healthy funds and retirees.

As a result, he and others are pushing for legislation that would take away the PBGC backstop and empower trustees to fix their funds.

“We’re not calling for the dissolution of the PBGC, “O’Sullivan says. “What we’re saying is it is not suitable long-term for [multiemployer] funds. We don’t want to pay any more premiums, and the PBGC can’t handle any more liabilities.”
Comprehensive Immigration Reform Should Protect All Workers

LIUNA was founded more than a century ago by immigrants struggling for citizenship and to improve their lives. These proud men and women helped build our nation, just as many immigrants do today. But our current immigration policy is failing both citizens and immigrants.

LIUNA supports comprehensive immigration reform that includes an earned path to citizenship for undocumented workers.

- Workers who pay taxes and contribute to their communities and whose only crime is lacking documents deserve a chance to earn U.S. citizenship.

- An earned path to citizenship should be realistic and achievable by those who have the ambition to become U.S. citizens. A lengthy waiting period, onerous penalties and a cumbersome bureaucracy should be avoided or reform will fail.

Reform should include strong and humane enforcement of our borders.

- A common sense approach should focus first on stopping criminals at the border. While border security is crucial, it is not the only step. Nearly half of unauthorized immigrants arrive lawfully, but overstay their visas. Reform should include an employer system to verify an immigrant’s work authorization, but the current system should be overhauled to ensure accuracy, to penalize employers who misuse the system, and to provide workers due process.

- The unity of immigrant families should be a key factor in the enactment of an earned path to citizenship for undocumented workers.

Labor standards must be enforced to protect workers’ rights so that immigration does not depress wages or working conditions.

- Our current immigration system allows unscrupulous employers to engage in wholesale worker exploitation, using fear of deportation to cheat workers out of wages or cut corners on safety.

LIUNA is opposed to guest worker programs in the construction industry.

- The U.S. has yet to prove it can implement a fair guest worker program. From the Bracero program to current temporary work visas, guest worker programs create a class of workers who are used to drive wage standards down for all workers.

- An independent commission should be established to assess and manage the future flow of immigrants, based on actual, proven labor market shortages.
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Supreme Court Split Decision on Immigration Underscores Importance of this Election and Urgency for Congress to Act on Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Washington, D.C. (June 24, 2016) – Terry O’Sullivan, General President of LIUNA – the Laborers’ International Union of North America – made the following statement today on the Supreme Court’s split decision on the President’s Executive Order to provide relief to immigrant families:

The Supreme Court’s inability to make a decision, thereby blocking any potential relief for immigrant families, underscores the importance of this election at all levels of government. The next President of the United States will have the critical job of filling the vacant seat on the Supreme Court—a seat that will be the deciding vote on critical issues that have an impact on families, workers, and our nation for years to come.

President Obama’s Executive Order was a temporary solution that was put forth after the U.S. House rejected the Senate’s bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform legislation. LIUNA was proudly founded in 1903 by immigrant workers and we have long been a proud and united advocate for comprehensive immigration reform. The current system is broken and leads to unfair results in far too many cases; including tragic family separations and worker exploitation. It is outrageous and perplexing that while this Congress cannot get comprehensive immigration reform done, it is able to get expansion of exploitative H2B visa programs passed.

It’s up to Congress to right the injustices in our current immigration system and it’s urgent that they do so. The 2016 election, which is around the corner, will set the stage for action on immigration and many other issues critical to our members. LIUNA strongly supports candidates, including Secretary Hillary Clinton for President of the United States, who will champion working class families, fight for immigration reform, and put the right person on the Supreme Court so that America continues to be a country that provides protection from exploitation and grants every person the opportunity to prosper from hard work.

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