Address the Labor Shortage

Workforce Development

Issue Overview

The residential construction industry experiences a shortage of between 200,000 and 400,000 workers each month. Even as the industry invests in job training programs, the U.S. workforce pipeline is not robust enough to meet demand. This acute labor shortage has an adverse impact on the supply of new housing and further limits affordability for home buyers and renters. Further developing America's construction workforce will require deeper investment in the national workforce development infrastructure and ambitious new solutions for encouraging participation in the trades.

Solutions

- Preserve and expand the Job Corps training program to strengthen America's workforce pipeline. Job Corps plays a vital role in training workers for the nation's most in-demand industries, including those supporting residential construction, and has trained and placed more than 3 million at-risk youth into promising careers in the last 60 years.
- Pass the bipartisan and bicameral CONSTRUCTS Act to give the nation's community colleges and trade schools the funding needed to train students in trades that support the residential construction industry. This funding also will prioritize recipients who are serving the most vulnerable populations in rural and underserved communities, giving Americans an alternative to most traditional academic pathways.

Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Issue Overview

Nearly a third of the U.S. construction trades workforce is comprised of immigrant workers. While the need for safe and secure borders is paramount, any activity in pursuit of that goal must carefully consider and mitigate the distress it would cause both to the construction industry's workforce and the overall national workforce. Any shock to the labor force would have an adverse impact on housing costs and supply as the country does not currently have a domestic workforce ready to fill the gap.

Solutions

- Continue to support the legal pathways that allow immigrant populations to enter and work in the United States. The H-2B temporary guest worker program is a necessary and valued tool for accessing immigrant labor for roles in construction when there is no available domestic talent. Preservation of the program, along with the prospect of additional visa cap relief throughout the year, gives businesses an important lifeline when labor strains threaten operations.

- Consider new and innovative approaches to supplementing U.S. businesses with critical labor. There are several legislative solutions in circulation that promote a more market-based approach to the visa system whereby market conditions determine the cap on visas to unlock greater benefits.
- Create new pathways to permanent residency or citizenship for those workers who are already in the U.S. and contributing key benefits to the economy. The home building industry risks an exacerbated skills gap if long-term workers with unique technical expertise – including workforce-dreamers, temporary protected status holders and H-2B visa recipients – aren't given the opportunity to continue providing vital contributions to America's housing supply.
- Any immigration reforms must balance the needs of securing our nation with the regulatory impact that might be felt by the business community. For example, it must be reinforced that employers are only required to conduct identity and work authorization checks on their direct employees – not those of their subcontractors.