



Vote “Yes” on SB 455 (-2 Amendment)

Make Apprenticeship the Standard on Large-Scale College Projects

- ✓ Create more opportunities for young people seeking employment
- ✓ Help address the aging out problem in the construction workforce
- ✓ Harness state’s purchasing power to employ companies who live by our values by investing in the future of our state’s workforce

Background:

The retirement of the Baby Boomer generation is creating an acute workforce shortage in the construction industry. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median age of construction workers has been steadily trending upward, from 36 in 1985, to 40.4 in 2010, and today in 2019, the average age of a construction worker is 42.6. The aging out of the construction workforce creates a problem that looms on the not too distant horizon. If nothing is done to reverse this trend, the future could be quite dire, with a construction workforce too small to keep up with the need for vital public infrastructure or the demand for forward-looking investments to stimulate economic growth and associated job opportunities.

Thankfully there is enough lead time that some fairly subtle adjustments can be made now that could greatly mitigate the impact of the problem. The solution is simple—to recruit more young people into careers in the vocational arts. The Oregon Legislature has taken the first step by ramping up investments in Career and Technical Education (CTE) in our high schools. However, investments in CTE programs alone do not fulfill the cradle to career continuum envisioned in the education enterprise paradigm. Apprenticeship and Training Programs are Oregon’s form of vocational higher education, and also serve as the entry point for careers in the construction industry—careers that offer attractive wages, healthcare, and retirement security.

We have waiting lists of young people who want to join our programs, and we want to accept more apprentices, but we can only accept as many apprentices into our programs that match the amount of work we have available for them, because completion of a specific number of work hours (and classroom hours) are required for each apprentice to advance through their program.

Summary:

SB 455-2 establishes a new prequalification standard to bid on large-scale college projects over \$8 million in total project cost. Current law requires bidders complete a form that demonstrates their responsibility as a contractor. These include requirements that the contractor be licensed, bonded, carry general liability insurance, pay Workers Comp., and be tax compliant. SB 455-2 would require colleges to update their responsible contractor application to include an additional prequalification that the bidder be registered as a Training Agent in an apprenticeship and training program certified by the Bureau of Labor and Industries.



Training Agent is the term used to describe a contractor who has made a commitment to provide on the job training to apprentices through participation and membership in a Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee (JATC). These JATCs are comprised of an equal number of employees and employers to ensure the standards created develop valuable and marketable skillsets for the apprentices, in the most cost effective way so that the fees established to pay for the training programs keep contractors cost competitive. Each apprenticeship and training program establishes standards and procedures through a committee process. BOLI describes JATCs as “the heart of the apprenticeship program.” There are craft-specific programs for both union and non-union apprenticeships that are available throughout the state.

For more information about how contractors can become training agents, please refer to BOLI’s FAQ document, which has been loaded into OLIS.

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