Take Carpenter Economics to the Polls with You

With only weeks before the November 2022 elections, members are beginning to choose elected officials to represent them including governors, members of congress, legislators, city council members, judges, school board representatives and numerous other locally elected officials. Some members will vote by mail ballot, while others will vote early in person or on election day. In the wake of unchartered economic uncertainty, most carpenters will ultimately head to the polls to ensure their voices are heard. It is your choice on how you vote, just make sure your vote is counted. Apathy only allows others to make decisions on your behalf.

Although more Americans voted in 2020 than any other presidential election in the past 120 years, approximately one-third of eligible voters still chose not to cast a ballot. Nearly 80 million eligible voters stayed home. During a presidential midterm election, voting can drop off by as much as 15-20 percent. If this year is anything like 2018, less than half of the voting population will decide elections for those who choose not to engage in their civic duty.

A low turnout in this year’s midterm election could mean that within the North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters, carpenter economics could be determined by those who do not understand or support our middle-class way of life.

*continued on page 3*
The results of these elections will determine infrastructure packages, bonding bills, policies, wages, benefits and ultimately, job security. You can join hundreds of thousands of carpenters, union members and families in your county or voting district to make a difference in this year’s elections.

Politicians are influenced by money and votes, so we will be working together as a large community to increase voter turnout this fall. We will ensure that our federal, state and locally elected officials listen to our needs. We will also stand up with a united voice on infrastructure, the economy, our veterans, our apprenticeships, energy, housing, economic development, and other key issues important to our members.

Please join me in this effort by contacting your state’s political directors or local Political Action Committee chairs and volunteering to help turn out voters for this election. The only way to ensure we survive these difficult economic times and emerge even stronger is to back candidates and issues that support our livelihoods.

As we volunteer, never lose sight of the importance of carpenter economics. We are all responsible for ensuring that we have the best representation, funding for our communities and a better quality of life.

Election participation is just one of the key freedoms we enjoy as Americans. Don’t let this opportunity pass. This November, as you head to the polls, we hope you will vote for candidates that support carpenter economics, collective bargaining rights, the Davis Bacon Act, prevailing wages, and the work that you do for others every day.

When you vote, please take carpenter economics with you.

In Solidarity,

Patrick M. Nilsen
Executive Secretary-Treasurer
North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters
Union Standards Provide Broad Economic Benefits

The popularity of unions is on the rise and is approaching approval levels that have not been seen in over 50 years. A recent study released by the Joint Economic Committee (JEC) and the House Committee on Education and Labor illustrates that two-thirds of Americans said they approve of unions in 2021, which was a major year of collective bargaining activity. Last year, 951 elections were held with a 70 percent success rate. It should be noted that the percentage did not include new unions, which were voluntarily recognized by their employers.

Unions play a critical role in broadening economic benefits for both members and non-union workers alike. With higher wages, better benefits and more control over work schedules, unions set industry-wide standards that boost pay and working conditions for all employees. In order to compete, non-union employers must also recruit and retain workers by offering comparable compensation and benefits. The result is an increase in the average wages of workers regardless of union affiliation.

According to the study, union membership decreased from 23 percent in 1983 to 12 percent in 2021. That decline has now stopped, and union activity has been consistently increasing. In addition to the 951 elections last year, established unions also demonstrated their strength by engaging in eight successful strikes of at least 1,000 workers. These strikes directly benefited workers by increasing hourly wages and retirement benefits, maintaining full employer-covered health insurance premiums, ending forced overtime, increasing job security, and providing advantages to new employees.

Ultimately, this increased interest in unions has provided positive spillover effects in industries with high unionization rates and provided economic benefits to workers across the board. This renewed movement has been supported through bipartisan efforts to protect and support workers’ rights to organize.

Many jobs created by the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will be subject to the Davis-Bacon Act, which establishes wage and benefit rates for construction workers on federally funded projects. Additionally, all large federal construction projects will include a project labor agreement, which is a collective bargaining agreement.

Americans’ Approval of Labor Unions, 1936-2021

According to a recent Gallup poll, sixty-eight percent of Americans approve of labor unions. Though statistically similar to last year’s 65 percent, the current reading is the highest Gallup has measured since 71 percent in 1965.

Biden Signs Executive Order Requiring Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) on Federal Construction Projects

The Biden-Harris Administration demonstrated their support for construction workers and unions on February 4, 2022, when President Biden signed an executive order requiring project labor agreements (PLAs) on all large-scale federal construction projects valued at over $35 million. Based on the fiscal year 2021 figures, this executive order is expected to impact $262 billion in federal contracts and the jobs of 200,000 workers.

Project labor agreements (PLAs) are a collective bargaining agreement that contractors have with one or more labor union(s), which establish the terms and conditions of a specific construction project before any workers are hired. PLAs include wages, benefits, working conditions, and protocols to resolve labor disputes. Any contractor awarded a federal contract (union or non-union) must agree and abide by a PLA.

In announcing the new executive order, the administration focused upon the benefits to taxpayers, workers and contractors including:

- Boosting the local economy by increasing employment opportunities and career advancements.

Unfortunately, President Biden only has the authority to impact construction funded by the federal government and not state or local projects. Most construction projects under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will not be covered under this executive order. So, the North Central States Regional Carpenter’s Union leadership will continue to work with elected state and local officials on ensuring good union contractors are awarded these projects to further support our members.
Long-Term Legislator and Carpenter Made a Difference

Tom Bakk, a long-standing member of the Carpenter’s Union, eight-year member of the Minnesota House and 20-year member of the Senate, is retiring from politics. Senator Bakk represents Senate District 3 including Cook, Koochiching, Lake and St. Louis counties in the northeastern part of Minnesota. He has held the position of majority leader and minority leader in the Senate. His lengthy career has included over 13 years as a regional council business representative, executive committee member, local union officer, Senate Tax Committee Chair, and even a run for governor. We took the opportunity to discuss trade unions, accomplishments, and politics with Senator Bakk just prior to his retirement at the end of 2022, and here is what he had to say:

How many years have you been a union member? I joined in June 1976, which makes me a 46-year member. I was 22 years old at the time.

My father was also a union carpenter, and there was no work on the Iron Range at the time. I built cabins on Lake Vermilion during my early years. It was helpful that I grew up around carpentry since there was not an apprenticeship program.

What got you interested in politics? It started when I was a business representative. I had a background in labor-management from studying that process in college. A lot of the older members took an interest in a young guy like me, and they put me on the negotiating committee to work on a statewide agreement. Back then, we worked under a statewide contract.

Proudest accomplishments in the legislature? I am fortunate to have been in Senate leadership or Chair of the Tax Committee since 2006. Based upon those roles, I have been in many rooms when decisions were made that put our members to work on large projects. When I was Tax Committee Chair, it dawned on me that the apprentice training facilities around the state should be exempt from property taxes, just like the vocational schools across Minnesota. I authored a bill and worked with House members to pass the legislation. Although it was a small bill to legislators, it saves our union funds thousands of dollars each year, which we can invest in our training programs.

As Senate Majority Leader, I helped close important deals like the raising of the minimum wage and all-day kindergarten. I also authored and passed numerous jobs-related bills including big projects like the Mall of America. I have also been involved with economic development opportunities on the Iron Range and across the state.

Do you have any advice for members who are running or thinking about getting into politics? First, I would say, we do have a lot of members and retirees who are in local offices, which is great. I would encourage members to consider running for the state legislature. You can really make a difference. That’s where the most important decisions are made. It can be a tremendous headache and a lot of work. However, the capitol is the place to be to protect our members from bad legislation. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of having people who understand our industry in the room to make decisions on behalf of our members when the doors are closed.

When it comes to being around the capitol, a lot of people used to say, “construction jobs are not real jobs.” It took people like Representative Mike Nelson and myself being in our positions to make the argument on behalf of the construction industry that these are careers. When you look at the retirements of Tim Mahoney (pipeliter), Mike Sundin (painter), and I, there are less trades people at the table when important decisions are being made.

On behalf of the North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters, I would like to thank Senator Bakk for his lifetime of dedicated service to the building trades, our infrastructure and our apprenticeship programs,” said Executive Secretary-Treasurer Patrick Nilsen. “It is impossible to measure the lives he has impacted, the number of families he has supported through his dedication to carpenter economics. He has truly provided working families a voice where it matters most, at the capitol.”

Politics Impact the NLRB and Worker Protections

written by Burt Johnson, NCSRCC General Counsel

Prior to the National Labor Relations Act (NRLA), states regulated their own labor practices. Many of them allowed businesses to file lawsuits demanding courts issue orders called injunctions which prevented workers from picketing, going on strike, or forming a union. As a result, powerful business interests were able to prevent workers from forming unions to combat exploitative working conditions and low pay.

In 1935, President Franklin Roosevelt signed the NLRA into law. This legislation was created to enforce federal labor laws through the five-member National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The NLRB’s general counsel became the top labor enforcement official pursuing legal action to punish employers who violated the NLRA. Since 1935, a variety of other laws have been passed protecting the rights and economic security of workers: the Social Security Act (retirement security), the Fair Labor Standards Act (overtime, minimum wage, etc.), Age Discrimination in Employment Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, Employee Retirement Income Security Act, Civil Rights Act (prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin), Family and Medical Leave Act, and the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

All these important laws protected the rights of workers and were based upon the employer-employee relationships. Unfortunately, powerful interests developed a way of circumventing these important laws to strip workers of their legal protections and economic security. Simply put, if the employer creates business models where workers were classified as independent contractors rather than employees, the employer could save a lot of money and deny employees their right to form or join a union under the NLRA.

The NLRB can only protect workers if the misclassification of those workers as independent contractors is a violation of the NLRA itself. Otherwise, employers can simply misclassify employees stripping workers of their right to form unions. In 2019, President Trump’s appointed NLRB decided that misclassification of employees was not a violation of the NLRA. President Biden, shortly after taking office, fired the anti-union general counsel of the NLRB and restored a pro-labor majority on the board. Since then, the newly appointed general counsel has taken action to reverse the previous NLRB rulings and to ensure that the NLRA protects employees from being misclassified as independent contractors.

This is a major win for workers and unions who want to grow their market share and give more workers a fair chance to become union members.

The NLRB has also announced “Joint Employer” rulemaking to make it harder for employers to avoid their obligations by subcontracting work to undercapitalized lower-tier subcontractors and labor brokers. Some construction employers utilize labor brokers and lower-tier subcontractors to act as the employer of their workforce. This practice can leave workers at the mercy of fly-by-night labor brokers who pay workers in cash and frequently do not carry workers compensation insurance. Under this illegitimate subcontracting relationship, the workers should be considered the employees of both the company paying them and the company controlling the wages and working conditions. This is critical in the construction industry in which many employers utilize subcontractors misclassify and others utilize so-called subcontractors purely to cheat their workers of wages, benefits, and better working conditions.
Pro-Labor Policy Decisions on this November’s Ballot

Organized labor will continue to be challenged by those who are unwilling to acknowledge the benefits of workers uniting for the common good. During the past two years, this Presidential Administration has been responsible for more pro-union policies than anyone may have anticipated. As midterm elections draw closer, changes may result in reversing some of the accomplishments of organized labor.

The U.S. Department of Labor, led by Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh, works to promote the welfare of workers, job seekers and retirees by administering and enforcing labor laws. Walsh was appointed by President Biden in 2021 as the first union member in this position in 50 years. Under his leadership, the DOL has made more labor-friendly rulings including the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, reestablishing employee protections from being misclassified, the expansion of the Registered Apprenticeship program, and the request for additional OSHA funding to help protect workers’ safety and health.

At the June 14, 2022 House Education and Labor Committee hearing where the policies and priorities of the US Department of Labor were examined, the hearing transcript noted Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh reiterating the need to create a construction industry model for registered apprenticeship and apply it to other industries. The building trades also have a robust pre-apprenticeship program that prepares construction workers for in-demand jobs.

Our current pro-worker culture may find stark resistance if anti-labor candidates control the U.S. House following the midterm elections. Unions will be one of the first targets if the political landscape shifts in November. The Department of Labor (DOL) and the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) will be under intense scrutiny, including a range of pro-labor policy decisions, the task force formed to encourage organized labor, and a wide-array of union-related regulations from the DOL.

In contrast, at the same June 14 hearing, Walsh noted that the DOL is working to expand apprenticeships and having dialogues with employers through the Good Jobs Initiative to discuss better pathways to good paying jobs. The Advisory Committee on Apprenticeship has been working to strengthen the apprenticeship system.

In contrast, Secretary Walsh responded on June 14 at the House Education and Labor Committee hearing that the DOL is not anti-business but instead wants to work with employers to help their workers succeed. He further stated that enforcement funding increases are necessary to make sure that when DOL puts out regulations and pursues worker protection initiatives, they are soliciting opinions from every stakeholder.

Workers’ rights are on the ballot this November. With those targeting the labor accomplishments made in the last two years, it is essential that union members and labor-friendly voters alike take to the polls and elect those proven to stand behind middle-class workers.

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The most effective way to ensure that carpenters’ voices are heard is to elect members to political office. Many of our members already hold positions as city council members, planning commission members, town supervisors, city board members and more (see page 23). However, we need additional members representing our interests when the polls close this November.

This year, we have three members, one former member and a spouse of a member running for office. All five have had member volunteers out door knocking, dropping literature, and making phone calls on their behalf to ensure carpenter issues are at the forefront. These candidates include:

• Gene Dornink, Minnesota State Senate 23, former member
• Nichole Klonowski, Brooklyn Park City Council, spouse of a Local 322 member
• Scott Luedtke, Wisconsin’s 73rd Assembly District, Carpenters Local 361
• Brian Raines, Minnesota House 34A, Carpenters Local 451
• Diego Morales, Coon Rapids City Council, Interior Systems Local 68

Nichole emerged successful in the August 9th primary and be on the November ballot along with Brian Raines and Senator Gene Dornink (running for re-election).

Member volunteers are critical to spreading the carpenter message and helping our member candidates get elected. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact your area’s Political Director for more information:

- Adam Durinick, Director of Government Affairs at adurinick@ncsrcc.org
- Kim Nelson, Assistant Political Director of MN at knelson@ncsrcc.org
- Felicia Hilton, Political Director of IA/NE/SD at fhilton@ncsrcc.org
- Andrew Disch, Political Director of WI at adisch@ncsrcc.org

“Thank you to all our member volunteers who have spent time and are committed to helping us elect candidates who strongly support carpenter economics,” said Executive Secretary-Treasurer Patrick Nilsen. “Your dedication is critical to ensuring elected officials who support carpenter issues are elected in November.”
City Leaders Against Wage Theft &
Tax Fraud Launch with Educational Seminar

City Leaders Against Wage Theft & Tax Fraud, a core committee designated as City Leaders Against Wage Theft and Tax Fraud, is committed to educating and working with their peers to deter and prevent wage theft and tax fraud in construction workers in Minnesota. The event was hosted by City Leaders Against Wage Theft and Tax Fraud, a coalition of municipal, elected officials that are committed to educating and working with their peers to deter and enforce wage theft and tax fraud in cities throughout Minnesota. Prior to the event, the North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters’ (NCSRCC) political department had formed a core committee designated as City Leaders Against Wage Theft and Tax Fraud. These members are committed to working together to find solutions to resolving wage theft in their communities.

April’s educational seminar was the first outreach event hosted by the group. Workers, contractors, and legal experts presented at the event.

“Without the Carpenters’ advocacy, I would have no idea how prevalent the construction wage theft problem is,” stated City Leaders Chair and Richfield City Council Member Simon Trautmann. “As a lawyer, I have worked on cases involving the individual aspect of wage theft, but in construction, it is a systemic problem.”

Attendees heard from workers impacted by wage theft and contractors, both union and non-union, who are attempting to compete against companies not following the legal requirements of employers. Worker misclassification affects 23 percent of construction workers in Minnesota according to a study conducted by the Economic Policy Institute in 2021. This business model often involves contractors hiring labor brokers who exploit workers while avoiding paying unemployment insurance, workers compensation, and payroll taxes. This unscrupulous practice provides those contractors an estimated 20 percent bidding advantage over honest contractors.

NCSRCC has been tracking wage theft for the past fifteen years. However, we are now involving municipal level politics into the fight. “It is extremely important that we work on this issue. It is the biggest threat to legitimate, both union and non-union. It threatens our jobs and our communities overall,” stated Woodrow Piner, Director for Central and Southern Minnesota.

This year, we have grown involvement from six to two dozen cities in Minnesota. We have expanded our presence within the League of Cities beyond the Twin Cities Metro to engage more cities from other areas of the state. “In the last year, we have grown our involvement from six to two dozen cities in Minnesota. We have expanded our presence beyond the Twin Cities Metro to engage more cities from other areas of the state. “In the last year, we have grown our involvement from six to two dozen cities in Minnesota. We have expanded our presence beyond the Twin Cities Metro to engage more cities from other areas of the state. This year, I expect us to expand our presence within the League of Cities, rural communities and work closely with county attorneys and city staff to create practical pathways for eliminating wage theft while raising public awareness about these crimes,” said Council Member Trautmann.

City Leaders Against Wage Theft and Tax Fraud will continue to build on the success of April’s educational seminar. “In the last year, we have grown involvement from six to two dozen cities in Minnesota. We have expanded beyond the Twin Cities Metro to engage more cities from other areas of the state. “In the last year, we have grown our involvement from six to two dozen cities in Minnesota. We have expanded our presence beyond the Twin Cities Metro to engage more cities from other areas of the state. This year, I expect us to expand our presence within the League of Cities, rural communities and work closely with county attorneys and city staff to create practical pathways for eliminating wage theft while raising public awareness about these crimes,” said Council Member Trautmann.

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Twin Cities Housing Alliance and Rent Control Policy

Last fall, the cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis put city ordinances on the ballot that imposed rent control policies for landlords. Despite North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters (NCSRCC) unsuccessfully advocating for the defeat of these ballot initiatives, our organization has stayed at the forefront of the issue by helping to form a coalition involved in lobbying behind the scenes for housing issues and other related policies.

The group is called the Twin Cities Housing Alliance, and they are preparing to do a more formal announcement soon. This alliance includes labor, business, developers, and other organizations with an interest in housing who are organizing to speak with one voice on policy issues that could slow or stop development.

Imposing rent control became a test case surrounding a policy initiative that has never been credited with keeping housing costs affordable. Many cities around the country have imposed rent stabilization measures only to realize that prices remain high and housing supply becomes greatly impacted by the rent control policy.

The Twin Cities Housing Alliance is making inroads across the region and, like a lot of the partnerships that NCSRCC supports, is a supportive role such as campaign manager or field director.

While Minneapolis has continued to build even though the development community had concerns about inclusionary zoning and their comprehensive plan.

Despite what happens in Minneapolis and St. Paul, other cities are hearing about these issues and will also need to grapple with affordable housing in their region. NCSRCC looks forward to meeting with cities, counties, and state officials about how we must build more housing supply with working carpenters who are paid a middle-class wage and benefit package.

The Twin Cities Housing Alliance is making inroads across the region and, like a lot of the partnerships that NCSRCC is involved in, we are leading the way in building relationships and directing the conversation around housing. This work supports our members who make a living building multi-family housing.

Building Power with Candidate Bootcamp

A new group of candidates to the North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters (NCSRCC) Work Boots to Wingtips (W2W) Candidate Bootcamp program were welcomed this past May. Members met in Saint Paul, Minnesota, for a two-day course about how to successfully run for office and win an election. Participants included members and spouses who have previously run for office, are considering running for office or want to play a supportive role such as campaign manager or field director.

"Helping members get elected is the key to ensuring elected officials support our issues," said Patrick Nilsen, NCSRCC Executive Secretary-Treasurer. "Carpenter economics and the prosperity of our membership is directly related to funding for things such as construction projects, permitting and eliminating tax fraud. Elected officials play an integral role in that process, and the best one to represent us is one of us."

During the two-day course, members learned campaign tactics, best practices, and the fundamentals of running for office. The conversations about values and activities fostered team building which was equally useful.

"It is important that our members and their spouses run for office. This curriculum prepares participants to campaign and win an election. Running for office can put a strain on the time you get to spend with family. Our members have an advantage being part of the programs NCSRCC offers, but they cannot replace the support they need from family members. We encourage any decision to run for office to be a family decision," stated Kim Nelson, W2W Instructor and MN Assistant Political Director.
The ongoing coronavirus pandemic has resulted in economic hardships for many Iowan families and workers. Due to the impacts of this health care crisis, many workers have been forced to rely upon unemployment compensation to pay their monthly bills and put food on their tables. However, during the legislative session of 2022, Governor Kim Reynolds and the Republican legislature voted to reduce unemployment benefits for hardworking Iowans. They claimed there were too many people receiving unemployment compensation.

In her Condition of the State Address, Governor Reynolds also insinuated the unemployed are laying in “hammocks.” The Republicans subsequently cut unemployment benefits from a 26-week period to a 16-week maximum. This ten-week reduction in payments will take $75 million dollars each year from working Iowans and provide that amount to businesses. In addition, the new law redefines misconduct, which is a basis for denying workers from claiming this benefit. This change will result in fewer workers being deemed eligible for unemployment compensation.

Iowa’s new unemployment compensation law went into effect on July 3, 2022. This legislation also contains significant changes. The new legislation reduced the length of payable benefits when a business closes from 39 weeks to 26 weeks. In addition, workers will now be required to take a job that pays less than their previous job after just two weeks of unemployment. The wage requirement to determine if a job is acceptable will also be calculated differently and utilize the wages earned in the highest quarter of the employment record. Specifically, this period is divided by 13 (the number of weeks in a quarter) to determine the average weekly wage (AWW).

For example: A worker earned $5200 in the highest quarter period. That amount is then divided by 13, which equates to $400 ($10 per hour). A job offer would be considered acceptable if the wages offered are at or above the following percentages based upon the duration of the unemployment period.

- AWW at 100 percent or above- acceptable if work is offered in the 1st week of a claim
- AWW at 90 percent or above - acceptable if work is offered during the 2nd/3rd week of a claim
- AWW at 80 percent or above- acceptable if work is offered during the 4th/5th week of a claim
- AWW at 70 percent or above- acceptable if work is offered during the 6th through the 8th week of a claim
- AWW at 60 percent or above acceptable if work is offered after the 8th week of a claim.

As of July 2022, Iowa’s unemployment rate is calculated just 2.7 percent. According to the Iowa Workforce Development statistics, April 2022 had the lowest level of unemployment claims since 1973. These facts emphasize the inaccuracies cited to pass this punitive legislation which hurts Iowan workers, families, and communities.

For more information, please see Iowa Unemployment Insurance Statistics: www.iowalmi.gov/uistats

July 2022 Unemployment Rate by County (Not Seasonally Adjusted)

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Iowa’s Ongoing Battle to Preserve Construction Standards and Collective Bargaining

While the North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters (NCSRCC) has successfully defended against many legislative assaults on workers in recent sessions, unions have suffered some critical setbacks under the leadership of the Republican legislative bodies and governor.

Since 2017, the Iowa Building Trades and public sector unions have faced an onslaught of attacks. Many Republican legislators, led by Governor Kim Reynolds, have worked to ban project labor agreements (PLAs) and preempt local governments from passing responsible bidder ordinances that provide unions and legitimate contractors the opportunity to fairly participate in the competitive bidding process.

These same majorities continue to make decisions that negatively impact carpenter economics and impact the lives of members. They created Davis-Bacon road funding swaps, a process which allows the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) to use dollars from the state’s roads budget for local roads instead of requiring federal dollars and corresponding Davis-Bacon prevailing wage rates for those projects.

This legislation also froze the state’s minimum wage at $7.25 per hour and preempted local governments from passing their own local increases. Iowa’s collective bargaining laws for public sector union employees were also gutted. In addition, the Republican majors implemented a controversial re-write of the workers compensation rules that harmed workers by removing work-related injuries known as “whole body” injuries from the system.

Along with these harmful legislative changes over the past two years, many Republicans have demonstrated their support for non-union contractors, especially the Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC). Working with our legislative allies, we were initially successful in preventing language which would have voided our subcontractor clause in our collective bargaining agreements requiring union general contractors to use union sub-contractors on jobsites. However, in 2022 with a Republican super majority, legislation was passed that voided our subcontractor clause. Labor unions are now left with the option of challenging this legislative action in district court.

In order to protect our members, NCSRCC continues to push back against anti-union, low-bid special interests in Iowa. We oppose the lobbyists and organizations that have successfully banned design-build as part of the bid process for large vertical construction projects. We also fought against special interests that successfully cut unemployment benefits by 10 weeks.

NCSRCC defends against harmful proposed legislation by working across party lines and obtaining assistance from both Democrat and Republican legislators in Iowa. This same bipartisan support is what we rely upon to preserve our fundamental rights and expand work opportunities for our members. This key support provides protection in the legislature for our hard-working members.

We will continue to rely upon friendly legislators from both parties to maintain our industry standards.

Although many of their colleagues in the Republican party have been willing to devalue the work carpenters do, we have been supported by every Democrat. We also recognize the valuable assistance from several key Republican supporters who understand working people’s issues.
Smith. Union Representatives care tions, “ said Iowa State Senator Jackie while ensuring members earn good Union trains and protects workers 2022. “It is clear that the Carpenters’ leaders in Iowa on job site tours in July - Sioux Falls, SD) took two elected (Local 948 - Sioux City, IA), Brendan Farrell (LU 587, Sioux Falls, SD) living in their own districts. also been surprised to learn that it is also be forced into substandard living conditions. Thank you for caring about people, projects and our community. “

The tours that the North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters complete with elected officials are critical to underscoring the importance of utilizing union labor on all public projects. These tours provide these leaders with direct knowledge of the value that union workers bring to their job sites every day. In addition, the elected leaders then can articulate the significance of carpenter economics to their colleagues, constituents, families and friends. We should all strive to live in communities where an honest day’s work is rewarded in a way that sup ports families and public services.

“The discussion we had about the labor broker’s involvement and other inequities was dis heartening to say the least,” said Iowa State Representative Steve Hansen. “Clearly, the state of Iowa can do more on the enforcement and inspection side. Not having enough money is an unacceptable excuse when the state has close to a $2 billion surplus. We know it is a matter of priorities and another example of why elections matter. You can be assured I will share this knowledge with my fellow Iowa House members and others in our communities who should be interested.”

Lincoln Takes Steps to Stop Tax Fraud

In the last edition of Carpenter Economics, you may recall reading about an ordinance passed by the City of Omaha back in February of 2021, which incentivized contractors to utilize apprentices on city-taxpayer-funded projects and document the accompanying payroll. A similar ordinance has now been passed in Lincoln.

After three public hearings and testimony from several local union carpenters, another similar ordinance was advanced and passed in the city of Lincoln in March 2022 on a 5-2 vote. Like Omaha, the Lincoln ordinance allows for a bid incentive up to $500,000 for contractors hiring apprentices starting in calendar year 2023. However, this ordinance also includes language indicating that taxpayer-funded projects over $500,000 will immediately require contractors to show proof of workers’ compensation on all paid wages and provide verifiable payroll records upon request. This stipulation also applies to sub-contractors. The Lincoln ordinance stipulates that all employees are to be paid via direct deposit or check with a record of payments and itemized withholdings, which will be retained.

“North Dakota Licensing and Political Work

With so much expected turnover in Bismarck, our North Dakota team has been reaching out to legislative and local candidates with screening questionnaires. We have had some success in working on energy, career connections, and engaging with the Fargo Morehead diversion project, and we continue to raise awareness of tax fraud and misclassification. Our area business representatives and political team have met Governor Burgum and numerous legislators and cabinet members to discuss these critical issues with them.

With the legislature and statewide offices so strongly dominated by Republicans, a bipartisan approach to our election and lobbying work has been essential for us to make incremental progress in North Dakota.
Governor Evers Bolsters Union Jobs and Tourism in Green Bay, WI

With the existing budget gap combined with the rising cost of supplies and materials, the effort turned to the state capitol. The state of Wisconsin has long had an active role in investing in tourism infrastructure, an $86 billion industry in the state. While there was general agreement that this was a worthy project, partisan gridlock at the capitol in Madison prevented legislative funding.

This effort then turned to the office of Governor Evers and his administration’s ability to use federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to boost industries hurt by the COVID-19 pandemic, including tourism. However, the use of these funds is highly restricted, and construction was not a common utilized purpose. Fortunately, Governor Evers’ office creatively devised the competitive Tourism Capital Investment grant to comply with ARPA. To qualify for the grant, projects must have a substantial capital construction component which could include projects like convention centers or travel centers like in the case of Green Bay. As a result, the visitor center applied and was awarded a $2.5 million grant from this program which fully funded the project.

The promise of work opportunities for union carpenters guided the advocacy efforts of NCSRCC throughout the entire process. After the Tourism Capital Investment grant was awarded, the project began to move forward. Local carpenters joined Governor Evers and Miron Construction leadership on June 28th for the ceremonial groundbreaking.

My number one priority as a state representative will always be to stand up for the middle class and working families. That is why I am so concerned about reports of rampant worker misclassification, particularly in the construction industry, from out-of-state contractors in our region and across the state. This practice not only exploits the workers, it also results in tax evasion and fraud impacting everyone.

Misclassification occurs when employees are misclassified as ‘independent contractors’ or even worse, paid cash off the books. We know that many good, local, responsible tax-paying construction companies play by the rules and treat their workers fairly. Unfortunately, there is a disturbing trend that has emerged in recent years where companies have won bids on large construction projects, are bringing in out-of-state workers and paying them low wages in under-the-table cash payments while dodging their tax responsibilities. This unfair practice has wide-reaching impacts on taxpayers, the construction industry, and the workers.

Each year, hardworking Wisconsinites pay their taxes to ensure access to the government services we need such as our first responders, good roads and highways and our public education system. Misclassification practices are a form of tax and insurance fraud. By failing to declare their workers as employees, companies avoid paying payroll taxes, unemployment insurance taxes, and the appropriate workers compensation premiums. It is estimated that the State of Wisconsin loses millions of dollars every year due to these deceptive practices which rob our communities of funding for our schools, roads, public safety, and other critical programs.

For workers in these employment arrangements, cash payments are often the initial draw to the work, but the hidden costs can be devastating. The workers often do not realize that by accepting cash payments, they are not eligible for worker protections such as unemployment insurance and social security. This puts them in the precarious situation of being one workplace injury away from being unemployed without any safety net. When workers do not have medical insurance, taxpayers also bear the burden of emergency room costs.

You may be shocked to learn that not only is this practice rampant within the construction industry, but it also occurs on taxpayer-funded projects. What is deeply concerning is that tax cheats could be the recipients of massive multi-million-dollar tax subsidies funded by those who pay their taxes.

While every single taxpayer in the state bears the burden of covering the costs of these deceptive practices, those in the construction industry who do things the right way stand to lose the most. Cheating contractors win low-ball bids for construction projects while honest contractors who play by the rules have difficulty competing. This creates a vicious cycle of tax cheating, leaving honest contractors and taxpayers to pay the price.

While this misclassification problem continues, I am encouraged that Governor Evers and others across the state are taking this issue seriously. In 2019, the Governor announced a Joint Task Force on Tax Fraud and Worker Misclassification through the Department of Workforce Development. The task force, comprised of honest employers and workers alike, has done important work in helping to identify this problem and increase awareness. However, more must be done to stop and prosecute perpetrators. The department needs more resources dedicated to identifying unethical contractors. This should be a no-brainer. These tax cheats need to be held accountable. Any back taxes owed would pay for the extra enforcement costs many times over.

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The North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters (NCSRCC) held Infrastructure Conferences to bring attention to the legislative jobs bills and projects that are putting our brothers and sisters to work. These gatherings have been an opportunity for members to meet elected officials, learn about the work outlook in their area, and engage in the political process in their communities.

Over the years, Carpenter members and their families have attended legislative conferences where they meet with their state lawmakers. The last couple years have challenged us with COVID restrictions, virtual legislative and committee sessions and other disruptions to having our voices heard in the legislative process.

This year’s Infrastructure Conferences have created opportunities to gather as one ensuring our voice is heard and we continue to stay politically engaged. Whether it is a specific project or key area of focus like housing, energy, water infrastructure, bridges, industrial building, or any other legislation that impacts our work, we will show up and be involved in the process. We invited the industry experts; we heard from leading legislators and elected officials; and we made sure they knew who we are and why our members are the lifeblood of the middle class in the North Central States.

The theme that unites our approach to politics and legislative advocacy is a focus on carpenter economics. We are speaking to elected officials about our members’ jobs and their livelihoods whether we are in Bismarck, Des Moines, Lincoln, Madison, Pierre, Saint Paul, Washington DC, or any city hall or county board meeting around the region.

In partnership with other state trade unions, the Minnesota Infrastructure Conference was held on May 18 at the Minnesota State Capitol. Members began their day meeting with their local legislators and joined a Minnesota Trades Rally for Jobs in the Capitol Rotunda later in the morning. The Rally called for state leaders to invest in local infrastructure, make workers safer on the job, and expand union construction career opportunities for women, veterans and people of color.

The 2022 Wisconsin Campaign Kickoff was held on June 16-17 at the Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells, WI. The Conference began with a member reception on June 16 followed by a formal conference on June 17. Opened by NCSRCC Executive Secretary-Treasurer Patrick Nilsen, other speakers included Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers, former Green Bay Packer Gilbert Brown, Sr. Public and Community Affairs Manager Zack Hill from Alliant Energy, NCSRCC energy consultant Bob Bartlett and a panel of elected members.

In Dubuque, Iowa, the Infrastructure Conference was held on May 24 and included a boat cruise of Lock 14 on the Mississippi River to learn about the upcoming work in the diving industry. NCSRCC’s Political Director Felicia Hilton, opened the Conference and was followed by a line-up of speakers including US Army Corps of Engineers Operations Project Manager Aaron Dunlop and Deputy Project Manager Brunsun Gothus. Other speakers included Representative Christina Bohannon, JF Brennan representative Jeff Steiber and Senator Liz Mathis.
## Congressional Scorecard

A cornerstone of Carpenter Economics is that we lobby our issues to Democrats and Republicans. Support for Davis-Bacon is support for good-paying construction jobs. Any attempt to eliminate or water down Davis-Bacon is an attempt to pay us and our other construction industry brothers and sisters less. It’s an attack on our livelihood and we must make sure we have support from Democrats and Republicans in Washington and locally.

In addition to Davis-Bacon support, we also advocate on jobs bills that create work opportunities for our members. Whether that is roads, bridges, transit, aviation, ports or other transportation work, whether Congress is weighing in on energy, housing, or industrial development, or other sectors of the economy, Carpenters Economics means fighting for jobs for you and your family.

### Davis-Bacon

Davis-Bacon prevailing wage votes occur in committee and on the floor of the U.S. House and Senate. We ask every candidate running for office to support our wages and benefits by supporting the Davis-Bacon Act.

### Infrastructure

The infrastructure bill was put together by a bipartisan panel of House and Senate members. These dollars will build out our highways, bridges, transit, airports, ports, and clean water projects around the country and create jobs for members.

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Carpenters in Public Service

County and school boards, city councils and other public offices regularly make decisions that directly impact our members. Whether it is deciding which contractors will be hired or determining city budgets and priorities, it is important for carpenters to participate in local politics to ensure union values and voices are heard. Listed below is a current list of members serving their communities in a public position.

- **Ryan Austin**, Local 310 - Rothschild, WI
  Wisconsin Rapids Common Council

- **Tom Bakk**, Local 606 - Virginia, MN
  Minnesota State Senate, District 03

- **Matt Bieser**, Local 344 - Pewaukee, WI
  Delavan City Council Member

- **Mark Bruner**, Local 314 - Madison, WI
  Brooklyn Village President

- **Rob Busch**, Local 322 - Saint Paul, MN
  Columbus City Council Member

- **Dennis Cashman**, Local 1146 - Green Bay, WI
  Town of Rockland Chair

- **Dennis Clegg**, Local 1056 - Kaukauna, WI
  Outagamie County Supervisor

- **Ernie Colt**, Local 948 - Sioux City, IA
  Western Iowa Workforce Development Board

- **James Cox**, Local 427 - Papillion, NE
  Mayor of Modale, IA

- **Gene Dornink**, Local 1382 - Rochester, MN
  Minnesota State Senate, District 27 (former member)

- **Derek Duehr**, Local 678 - Dubuque, IA
  Stonehill Benevolent Foundation Board
  Greater Dubuque Development Corp

- **Carl Genz**, Local 344 - Pewaukee, WI
  Village of Greendale Trustee

- **Richard Glomski**, Local 731 - Sheboygan, WI
  Town of Schleswig Supervisor

- **Jesse Gregerson**, Local 427 - Papillion, NE
  Downtown Omaha INC Board Member

- **Kevin Hennessy**, Local 1143 - La Crosse, WI
  West Salem Village Board

- **Mike Higgins**, Local 314 - Madison, WI
  Watertown Unified School Board

- **Sam Heimlich**, Local 322 - Saint Paul, MN
  Governor’s Workforce Development Board

- **Gary Huc**, Local 1146 - Green Bay, WI
  Crivitz School Board

- **Burt Johnson**, Local 322 - Saint Paul, MN
  Workers Compensation Advisory Council

- **Dave Jacoby**, Local 1260 - Iowa City, IA
  Iowa Legislator, House District 74 Johnson County

- **Tom Klika**, Local 1146 - Green Bay, WI
  Town of Glenmore Supervisor

- **William Krueger**, Local 1146 - Green Bay, WI
  Town of New Denmark Chair

- **Rick Lautenschlager**, Local 1056 - Kaukauna, WI
  Outagamie County Supervisor

- **Pat Loeffler**, Local 308 - Cedar Rapids, IA
  Cedar Rapids City Council Member

- **Scott Luostari**, Local 361 - Hermantown, MN
  Douglas County Supervisor

- **Bill Murphy**, Local 1143 - La Crosse, WI
  Village of Necedah Trustee

- **Michael Nelson**, Local 322 - Saint Paul, MN
  Minnesota State House, House District 40A

- **Royce Peterson**, Local 1260 - Iowa City, IA
  Hawkeye on Safety Committee Member
  Hawkeye Area Labor Council Trustee

- **Ruben Piepenburg**, Local 1056 - Kaukauna, WI
  Brillion Common Council

- **Jeff Peterson**, Local 322 - Saint Paul, MN
  Forrest Lake School Board Member

- **Royce Peterson**, Local 1260 - Iowa City, IA
  Citizen’s Community Policing Advisory Board

- **Matt Scott**, Local 427 - Papillion, NE
  Sarpy County Economic Development Committee
  Greater Lincoln Work Force Development Committee

- **John Weiner**, Local 310 - Rothschild, WI
  Ashland County Supervisor

- **Justin Weninger**, Local 2283 - Pewaukee, WI
  Kewaskum Village Board

- **Chuck Yohanek**, Local 731 - Sheboygan, WI
  Reedsville School Board

- **Zachariah Zebell**, Local 1143 - La Crosse, WI
  Monroe County Board