

TAKE ACTION: Bureaucrats in Washington are trying to destroy our Apprenticeship Program. Don't let them.

August 17, 2019



PROTECT IBEW APPRENTICESHIPS

**WASHINGTON BUREAUCRATS
WANT TO WEAKEN
OUR TRAINING**

Make your voice heard.

www.saveIBEWtraining.org



The IBEW urgently needs your help to protect our training programs from a pending federal rule that would let businesses run shoddy apprenticeships with minimal standards, oversight and pay.

For now, the construction industry is excluded from the Department of Labor's proposed Apprenticeship Rule. Public comments being submitted now will help determine whether the exemption stays or goes once a final rule is issued. While unions and allied contractors are pushing to keep the exemption, nonunion builders are eager to eliminate it, opening up the industry to apprenticeships with lower standards and greater risks.

A new website makes it easy to add your voice to the public record. The comment period is set to close Aug. 26 but may be extended. IBEW International President Lonnie R. Stephenson is asking members from all branches and their families to join him in telling the DOL that the exemption benefits all Americans by preserving superior building standards, worksite safety and family-wage jobs. "The IBEW and our brothers and sisters in the building trades already run the most exemplary training

programs in the country, building a workforce that commands industry-wide respect and is paid accordingly,” Stephenson said.

“We depend on each other’s advanced skills and commitment to safety to ensure that our projects are a source of pride and that we all go home in good health at the end of the day,” he said. “The workforce could change in detrimental ways if the construction industry isn’t exempted permanently from the new rule.”

The IBEW’s inside and outside construction apprenticeships and similar journeyman training through other unions are registered with the DOL and meet or exceed stringent standards.

The proposed rule would create IRAPs, or Industry Recognized Apprenticeship Programs, that would give employers wide latitude to decide how many hours of instruction to provide, what the curriculum will include, and how much, or little, apprentices need to achieve to graduate. The association of North America’s Building Trades Unions says the rule may benefit some businesses and workers if it lives up to administration promises to create new training opportunities and a path to good-paying jobs. For instance, IRAPs may be well suited to white-collar apprenticeships in areas such as business management, banking, software technology and paralegal work. But the hazardous world of construction is another story, one where watered-down, penny-pinching training would pose grave risks to workers and the public, Stephenson said.

“IRAPS have no place in construction,” Stephenson said. “Our jobs demand meticulous attention to detail and a skill level honed through years of intense classroom and hands-on training. We build schools and hospitals, office towers and sports arenas, highways and bridges and utility infrastructure that powers North America. “Those projects and everything else we build demand the best-trained, highest-skill workers. Anything less puts public safety at risk.”

NABTU stressed that construction and construction maintenance “are, by their very nature, among the most dangerous industries. Workers perform difficult physical labor, and are often exposed to extreme temperatures, heavy machinery, toxic substances and hazards related to oncoming traffic on road and bridge projects.”

The unions’ current Registered Apprenticeship Programs – the “gold standard” of training, NABTU said — “guard against these inherent dangers and promote first-rate work.” “Based on our 100 years of experience running the world’s most successful job training model, we know what works to meet specific demands of employers and an entire industry, while also providing workers with pathways to the middle class.” IRAPs threaten to block those paths.

Without a construction industry exemption, nonunion contractors could pay apprentices as little as minimum wage and wouldn’t be bound by wage progression rules on Davis-Bacon projects. The result would be stagnant wages on federal worksites or, worse, Stephenson said.

He added that IRAPs are likely to exclude journeyman-apprentice ratio requirements, jeopardizing safety by opening federal projects up to an influx of low-wage apprentices. “Low-road contractors who don’t have to comply with wage and ratio rules will have an unfair advantage in bidding,” Stephenson said. “We can’t let that happen.”

Help save the exemption by going to saveIBEWtraining.org. The website will guide you through the public comment process, with options that fit your experiences and concerns. After you fill out a few mandatory fields, the website will generate a comment letter for you to preview, edit and submit.

“Whether you’re an apprentice or journeyman or a brother and sister in other sectors who understands the value of building projects being in the hands of the highest-quality workers who put a premium on safety, please join with us to make sure it stays that way,” Stephenson said.