

Testimony by Dan Barrow
Zachry Industrial Incorporated
Before the Texas Senate Committee on Business and Commerce
April 10, 2012

I am honored to bring this testimony to you today.

My name is Dan Barrow, a native Texan from Pleasanton. I have been employed by Zachry Industrial Incorporated for the past 20 years. Part of my current duties includes the training coordination for our construction equipment department but for several years I was responsible for the training and development of our craft workers and their supervisors. At this time, Zachry is one of the largest open shop contractors in the United States, with nearly 11,000 employees nationwide.

I am here today to represent both the construction industry and the Career and Technology Education that is taught in most Texas High Schools. The Construction Industry is one of the largest employers of any industry in the United States. This equates to an industry that affords the most citizens of this country and state the ability to support themselves and their families and to make a positive impact on our country's economy and infrastructure. At this time, the average age of a person coming into the construction workforce is 26 to 27 years old and the average age of the employed craft worker is 47 years old. By these statistics, it is easy to see that the builders of tomorrow need an infusion of young, skilled crafts men and women.

In 2004, the Brookings Institute predicted that nearly half of the built environment needed in the United States by the year 2030 didn't exist at that time. With the economic downturn that we have experienced since 2008, it is obvious that we are behind the curve with regards to all sectors of construction including power plants, housing, roads, and bridges to mention a few. To make up this deficit, the Construction Labor Research Council says that 185,000 skilled workers will be needed annually for the next decade. Personally, I think that this number is short of the mark that will be needed. Looking at current age demographics, 20% of the construction workforce is expected to retire in the next 4-6 years. This will create an additional gap in the experiential skill level of the workforce as well.

In the "Pathways to Prosperity", a 2011 White Paper from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, the following quotes can be found.

- **Skilled Occupations** - “The Georgetown Center projects 14 million job openings - nearly half of those will be filled by workers with post-secondary education - will go to people with an associate’s degree or occupational certificate. Many of these will be in ‘middle-skill’ occupations such as electrician and construction manager.”
- **Higher Earnings** - “27% of people with post-secondary licenses or certificates – credentials short of an associate’s degree – earn more than the average bachelor’s degree recipient.”
- **Credentials** - “Fields like construction and manufacturing will provide nearly 8 million job openings, 2.7 million of which will require a post-secondary credential. In commercial construction, manufacturing, mining and installation, this kind of post-secondary education – as opposed to a B.A. – is often the ticket to a well-paying and rewarding career.”
- **Post-Recession Shortage** - “Business leaders are warning that once the recession ends, they could face shortages of qualified workers in areas ranging from non-residential construction and energy to information technology.”
- **High School Experiences** - “Teens who have good high school work experiences are more likely to be inspired to stay in school, graduate, and adopt ambitious goals.”
- **Post High School Credential for All** - “The ‘College for All’ rhetoric that has been so much a part of the current education reform movement needs to be significantly broadened to become a ‘post high school credential for all.’ “A narrowly defined ‘college for all’ goal – one that does not include a much stronger focus on career-oriented programs that lead to occupational credentials – seems doomed to fail.”

Today’s skilled construction labor market is extremely competitive. After working 2 to 4 years as a helper while learning their trade, Zachry journey level workers are earning \$50,000-\$90,000 per year. At this wage, these employees are able to feed their families, buy homes and vehicles, and live comfortably.

What is needed in today’s educational system is a parallel path approach that will allow high school students to learn career initiating and certifiable skills to either enter the workforce or continue their education towards a post-secondary certification, license, associate degree, or bachelor degree. This system needs to be designed to allow students or workers to be able to freely

move from the work place to the classroom or vice versa as they feel the need to support their career choices, lifestyles, and dreams without losing credits. This can be done through the use of Compact Agreements authored by the Coordinating Board of Higher Education. These agreements are made between a High School's Career and Technology department and a local Trade School, Community College, or Junior College. The Coordinating Board has a handful of these available, but many more need to be written to create greater diversity in career choices.

But having these Compact Agreement "out there" is not enough, they need to be promoted and supported fully by the TEA, the Coordinating Board, and local ISD's. Currently, this is not happening.

I can think of no greater way that this Committee can encourage business and commerce in this state and help ensure a continued growth of the Texas economy than to support the promotion of Career and Technology education at all levels. I am sure that the Directors of the state Career and Technology Teachers Associations have numerous ideas that they would be willing to share with this committee that can give further guidance.

Who will rebuild the tornado damaged areas of Dallas? Who will build the coal, gas and nuclear power plants that will energize our futures? Who will build the next shopping centers that generate business and commerce? And, who will build the roads and bridges needed so employees can get to and from work easily? It will be skilled craft workers that are properly educated and trained. The need is here. The need is now.

If any of you are interested in learning more about how the adult education side of Career and Technology can work, I invite you or your staffs to attend the ABC National Craft Championships that will be held in San Antonio, April 24- 27. If you will notify me of your desire, I will ensure a VIP tour of the competition.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today on this important topic. Do you have any questions?

Zachry School of Welding

We believe people are the only source of a sustainable competitive advantage and they are the key to our success. Our continued commitment to them — both on and off the job — is foundational to our corporate citizenship. Our people development strategy focuses on developing our employees to be successful contributors to their communities in parallel with their professional careers. Selectively, and as part of our community investment strategy, we invite non-employees to participate in these programs to enhance their leadership and other technical skills. Our objectives are:

- Enrich the employee life cycle by aligning employee talents with business objectives.
- Strategically utilize all available programs, such as formal training, loaned executive program and board placements, to enhance individual development.
- Implement a specialized, ongoing recruitment and retention program aimed at engaging a talented and diverse workforce.

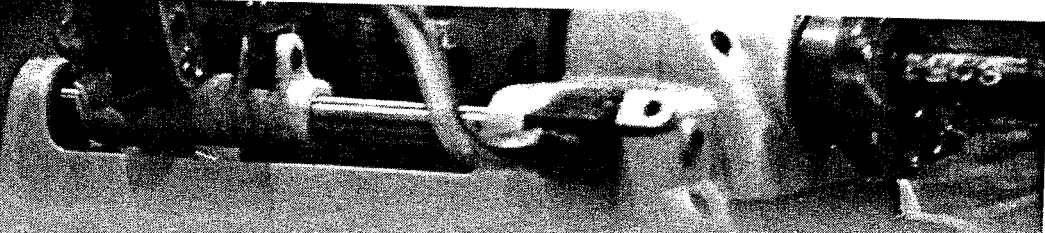
A “signature” program of people development is the Zachry School of Welding, a free public training and certification program offered in 2009 to attract new workers into the industrial construction industry, provide members of the community with quality skills training and introduce them to Zachry, and provide a source of additional labor resources for current and upcoming projects. Selected applicants attended training sessions on their own time for 14 to 16 weeks. Of 24 initial students, 14 successfully completed the program. Ten of these were placed on Zachry projects, and four were entered into our employee tracking system to maintain contact for future opportunities. The School of Welding was a win / win initiative that benefited individuals, the community and Zachry by increasing the number of skilled craft workers who put safety first and by fostering a sense of connection and loyalty among potential Zachry employees.

NATIONAL CRAFT CHAMPIONSHIPS

2012

- About the NCC
- Registration Materials and Guidebook
- Previous Competition Highlights
- Schedule and Travel Information

Contributions and Sponsorships



As the highlight of the 2012 EdCon & Expo, craft trainees from chapter and member firm training programs across the country come together to compete in the annual National Craft Championships, the embodiment of ABC's continuing commitment to foster growth and excellence in training among our nation's future workforce. During this intense two-day event, young men and women compete in one of 12 competitions, representing 10 crafts.

The first National Craft Championships was held in 1987 with only a handful of participants competing in four craft competitions. More than 25 years later, nearly 1,500 men and women have competed in what has grown to become one of the construction industry's most recognized and revered craft skills events, thanks to the dedication and hard work of our member firms and ABC chapters.

For many ABC members, the National Craft Championships is the highlight of the year. Craft trainees from chapter and member firm training programs across the country come together to compete in an intense two-day event that turns a convention center into an active construction site, in which craftworkers use their skills and knowledge to compete head-to-head with their peers to be recognized for their construction achievements.

Throughout the years, many faces have become familiar at the National Craft Championships. Instructors, corporate sponsors, project managers, judges and numerous volunteers return year after year to lend a helping hand, and past competitors often join them to nurture the next group of competitors following in their footsteps.

We encourage you to become a part of ABC history. Compete in the National Craft Championships. It's an experience of a lifetime that will nurture you throughout your construction career.

Text/HTML

APRIL 24 -27, 2012

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Deadlines

Intent to Compete due February 3, 2012

Competitor Registration(s) due March 5, 2012

Competitor Guest Registration(s) due March 5, 2012

Questions? email



DONATE TODAY!

Donate today and help the National Craft Championships. Donate >>



BEACON BlazeMaster®
electrical contractors FIRE SPF WEB FONTS BY fonts.com