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By Mark Roberts-Chairman's message: What we have accomplished together

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In my final message as chairman of Associated Builders and Contractors of Massachusetts (ABCMA), it's only natural to look back on what we have accomplished together this year. But it's equally important that we look forward, because the work we have done in this and previous years will shape our agenda for 2012.

First and foremost, I'm thrilled about the Merit Apprentice Program (MAP), which was approved last month. Thanks to this new program, ABC member firms can meet all apprenticeship requirements and finally compete on a level playing field for public work.

Another recent victory was a federal court decision that struck down Fall River's so-called responsible employer ordinance. The clarity with which the judge struck down the residency, apprenticeship and health insurance provisions likely invalidates REOs across Massachusetts.

We have also mounted a strong campaign against the Massachusetts School Building Authority's (MSBA) practice of offering financial incentives for using the construction manager at risk delivery method, even though the data suggest it is significantly more expensive. Having brought it to their attention, the MSBA is now taking a serious look at the policy. Since the firms with experience using CM at risk are almost exclusively union, the method serves a means of excluding the merit shop from school construction.

Many of these accomplishments have been made possible thanks to the strong relationships we have developed and nurtured on Beacon Hill. House speaker Robert DeLeo, for example, is particularly interested in the MAP program and its potential for putting people to work. We look forward to continuing to work with him.

On a different front, ABCMA achieved an 87% member retention rate this year, despite the bad economy. That compares favorably with our national organization's 75% retention. This year's planning conference focus on membership and specifically increasing the number of general contractor members promises to keep retention high.

None of these accomplishments would have been possible without the staff that makes ours such a great organization. I know they will provide incoming chairman Dennis Maguire with the same support they've given me.

ABCMA will be in good hands during the coming year under Dennis's able leadership. I wish him the best of luck and also offer my sincere thanks to all of you for making this a great year.

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