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New England Patriots assistant coach Dante Scarnecchia to speak at ABC's March 21 dinner meeting

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Many of our older members remember what it felt like well over a decade ago when we learned about the decision to place a project labor agreement on construction of the "Big Dig." The union-only agreement meant that the 80% of the Mass. construction workforce that wasn't affiliated with a labor union would be shut out of the biggest public works project in Massachusetts history.

Given the results of the Big Dig, you might think that Mass. leaders would have learned their lesson. But although ABC and its allies have succeeded at making union-only PLAs far less common, they are by no means extinct. Just a couple of years ago, it was announced that the open shop majority would be banned from \$750 million in University of Mass. construction work.

With the close ties between Governor Deval Patrick and Lt. Gov. Tim Murray with Mass. construction unions, the threat of more PLAs is very real, and ABC's political clout is the main counterbalance to that relationship. Our counterbalance is not a secret recipe, it is hard work by a dedicated staff and membership attending and participating in endless meetings amongst officials and meetings with legislators, constitutional officers (AG, Treasurer etc) , and officials of numerous agencies. The message we bring is simple and straightforward: We are construction in Mass. representing merit shop companies. Our ABC company members provide opportunities and careers for families in Mass.

Recently, we have made great strides on Beacon Hill by making our case in a clear and professional way. Our ability to continue to fight effectively for fair and open competition is directly related to the number of employers we represent. For years, "More members, more clout" has been an ABC rallying cry, and with good reason.

On Wednesday evening March 21 at 5:00 pm ABC will hold an important membership recruitment event at McGladrey's Charlestown headquarters, featuring dinner and remarks by Patriots assistant head coach Dante Scarnecchia. We have carefully selected the company representatives invited to the event.

But an invitation - no matter how compelling - from someone you don't know is never as good as the personal touch. That's why we need you, our members, to reach out to colleagues who should be ABC members and urge them to attend. Better yet, join us and bring them to the event yourself.

ABC's cause of fair and open competition is the right one. For us to ultimately prevail, we need the boots on the ground to back it up. On March 21, please help make our most important recruitment event of the year a success by reaching out to those who should be part of our team. Help us, Help you!

Dennis Maguire is the president of Mass. Chapter of the Associated Builders & Contractors, Burlington, Mass.