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Efforts advocating for sensible legislation proves successful - by John Anderson

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John Anderson

We've advocated time and again for the importance of engaging in government affairs, and our commitment is paying dividends. Last month the critical "Joint Rule 10" deadline passed, the date by which state legislative committees must decide whether to approve or disapprove of the bills they've been considering since the beginning of the legislative session in early 2017. I am happy to report that our efforts advocating for sensible legislation and opposing detrimental and poorly vetted bills resulted in a generally successful Joint Rule 10 day, with one potential exception.

For instance, a bill that would have created a separate and broader definition of "fraud" solely for purposes of public construction bidding has been sent to a study, the legislative version of being put out to pasture. Two bills ABC supports, one that would allow including online courses in mandatory continuing education for electricians and another that would allow veterans to receive credits for relevant military experience when applying for a permit or license, were given favorable reports.

One issue ABC has been intimately involved with over the past two legislative sessions is finding ways to combat wage theft, which has absolutely no place in any business or industry. Wage theft is illegal, it harms employees and their families, and negatively impacts law-abiding businesses. Unfortunately, pending legislation includes a vicarious liability element that would unfairly hold businesses that are operating in good faith liable for the acts of any other businesses they hire. This is not the right solution, nor would it get employees paid faster. We have organized a broad, multi-industry coalition to offer alternative proposals that we believe will better address the issue. We are standing strong in our opposition to vicarious liability and our goal remains to keep this dangerous concept out of any bill that is enacted. Depending on how this legislation evolves, we may need to call upon ABC members to lobby their legislators, so stay tuned.

Wage theft aside, our ABC chapter has enjoyed growing momentum on Beacon Hill. We have a Governor whose administration values our input and we have developed strong relationships in the Legislature. In addition, trade boards that not long ago consisted exclusively of union members are now balanced.

In the past, ABC's lobbying efforts largely consisted of trying to stop bills that would hurt our industry

and member companies. But today I'm happy to report that we are in a position to proactively advocate for changes that would improve the industry. During this legislative session we worked on veterans' licensing and an apprentice tax credit, among others.

To make the most of this opportunity, we need your help to identify issues on which we should move proactively. If you have issues you think we should get behind or thoughts on the ones we've been supporting, please contact ABC Public Affairs Director Rob McGovern at rob@abcma.org or (781) 273-0123.

By continuing to focus on what happens on Beacon Hill, we can make the good times our industry is currently enjoying even better.

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