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ABC chairman's message: 2018 - a year in review - by John Anderson

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John Anderson

Like so many others before me, I began my tenure as chairman full of ideas for how to make ABC an even stronger organization. What I wasn't prepared for was just how quickly the year goes by. I suspect that is a feeling some of my predecessors may also be familiar with.

With the construction industry booming, our top priority was to develop a pipeline of qualified talent to help member companies meet the demand. I'm pleased that this year we launched ABC's Pre-apprentice and Leadership Academy, which was funded by a 2017 grant from the Commonwealth Corp.

The first class of graduates, most of whom recently graduated from high school, were vetted through the Merit Apprenticeship Program and are not just seeking a job; they're looking for a career in the construction industry. The candidates include inner-city minorities, males and females. They come with assets such as a strong work ethic, empowerment and leadership skills – all of which are part of the curriculum – as well as more tangible benefits such as OSHA certification. These young men and women are improving their lives while simultaneously filling the needs of our member companies. A few are still available for hire. Please contact ABC for more information.

Having previously headed the Government Affairs Committee, I'm pleased to say that 2018 was a successful year on that front. After years of exclusively playing defense, we were able to have ABC candidates appointed to the trade boards that play such an important role in our industry. We also find more and more legislators willing to work with us to file pro-active legislation.

We do still operate in a state in which unions have unmatched political muscle. Nonetheless, we were able to defend against a number of bills that would have hurt the industry and the open shop. Most notable was legislation that would have held contractors – and all employers - vicariously liable for wage violations of any businesses they hire.

It was also another great year for membership, which rose for the sixth consecutive year. Our fall drive netted 33 new members and we once again achieved 90% member retention.

There is much more to accomplish, and ABC will continue to move forward in 2019 under the able leadership of Karl Hudson. But we will experience one great loss: the retirement of Gould Construction Institute (GCI) president Barbara Lagergren, who is leaving on a high note. The Gould has record enrollment of over 900 students at nine locations across Massachusetts. Thank you, Barbara, for 32 years of service to GCI and ABC.

Barbara's departure does come with something of a silver lining. Her replacement, Julie Kelliher, has worked with her for the last two years. She's ready to take the reins at the GCI and will do a great job.

The last year has been unforgettable. I want to thank each of you for the honor of serving as chairman and send you and your families my best wishes for a happy, healthy, prosperous New Year.

John Anderson is the 2018 chairman of the Associated Builders and Contractors Inc.-Mass. Chapter, Woburn, Mass. and is the president of Plumb House Inc., Milford, Mass.

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