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## **ABC Chairman's Message: Back to basics - Free and open competition - by Joe Camilo**

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Joe Camilo

Our chapter's mission statement reads:

"ABC believes that the common good is best served by an open and competitive marketplace; that every company, regardless of its affiliations, has the right to compete free of coercion by any group or organization; and that every person must have the opportunity and right to work. Toward this end, ABC's mission is to foster an environment that ensures our members and their employees the ability to grow and prosper."

Amid all the things that pull us in countless directions every day, there is value in periodically refocusing on core principles. As I return to serve a second term as ABC MA chair, I believe this is one of those times. I'm proud of what our organization stands for; ours are the principles that built this great nation.

We will surely face no shortage of challenges in the coming year. We already know that finding enough qualified workers to meet demand is a long-term problem in our industry. In Washington, many of the current administration's policies are at odds with our view of free and open competition.

Thankfully, the picture is somewhat different in Massachusetts. A year into her term, governor Maura Healey has welcomed our input and understands that if the Commonwealth is to prosper, we don't have the luxury of excluding any portion of the construction industry. We hope she appreciates the need to revisit restrictive hiring ratios that limit our ability to hire apprentices. Diversity is a strength. Expanding our talent pool in construction will not only help meet demand, it will provide opportunities for more of our citizens to have a meaningful, well-paying career.

Thanks to the good work done under the leadership of Vera Vadeboncoeur in 2023, our organization is stronger than it was a year ago. We have been awarded several competitive grants that fund the pre-apprenticeship programs that help to build a talent pipeline for member companies. That workforce development goal is also being served by the success of the Gould Construction Institute's daytime electrical program. These are just a couple of the reasons why ABC MA prospered on Vera's watch.

One thing we know about 2024 is that we will undoubtedly find ourselves grappling with issues we couldn't possibly foresee today. As we confront them, let's remember our core values of open competition that is free of coercion, and each individual's right to have the opportunity to work.

Thank you for again putting your faith in me. It's my honor to serve as ABC MA chair for 2024.

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