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Chairman's message: Moving forward in today's economy

December 17, 2008 - Construction Design & Engineering

Despite the profound challenges posed by a painful recession, we must continue to push ahead on issues that are important for the construction industry. Associated Builders and Contractors of Massachusetts (ABCMA) is doing that with an aggressive agenda that builds on what we have achieved in the past year.

In 2008, we worked with the Legislature on important bond bills for higher education, the environment, transportation, housing and life sciences. The bills will govern how the Commonwealth spends billions of dollars over the coming years.

ABCMA succeeded at maximizing value for taxpayers by defeating provisions that would have limited competition and all but shut the open shop workers who make up 84% of the construction workforce out from participating in the projects funded by these bond bills.

We are currently working with our allied trade groups and the Attorney General's office on strong and fair enforcement of the state's Independent Contractor Law in order to ensure that there is a level playing field for workers and contractors. It is also important that the government receives its appropriate tax revenues.

As an organization, ABCMA added 70 new members in 2008. We launched Green Construction Committee that will help keep the organization on the cutting edge of fast-changing industry. Strategic Alliances and Diversity Committees were also formed, which led to a successful "Meet the Generals" event at Madison Park High School in Roxbury. The event was co-sponsored by the National Association of Women in Construction and the Massachusetts Minority Contractors Association. These organizations, along with the Massachusetts Alliance and the State Office of Minority and Women Business Assistance, joined ABC in October for a highly successful dinner presentation on diversity.

Our Gould Construction Institute (GCI) affiliate supported these initiatives by selling out two Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Accredited Professional (LEED AP) classes. The initial offering of GCI's construction management program, held in conjunction with Wentworth Institute of Technology, also sold out. The Gould Memorial Trust awarded 10 more scholarships, bringing the 15-year value of scholarships granted to more than \$300,000.

Building on such a strong record of success helps to counteract some of the effects of a difficult economy. This year, ABCMA will continue working to increase political participation not only among our member companies, but also their employees. One key priority will be to fight federal "card check" legislation, which removes the protection of a secret ballot in determining whether to form a union.

With money tight, we will also redouble our efforts to educate public officials on the efficiencies and value open shop construction offers.

We will also work to help our members understand the business opportunities green construction

provides and make legislators aware of our growing expertise in the area.

Finally, we will continue to forge and build on relationships with related organizations and to work to enhance partnerships between our member firms and women and minority-owned businesses.

Tough times only make it more important for organizations like ours to communicate the value our member companies provide and push for reforms to maximize that value. The progress ABCMA has made over the past year puts us in a better position than ever before to aggressively make the case in 2009 for the benefit of merit shop construction.

Thank you for your assistance and support of ABC's efforts throughout 2008. It has been my privilege and pleasure to serve as chairman of the chapter this year. Happy holidays!

Chris Kenney of Kenney & Sams, PC, Boston, is the chairman of Associated Builders and Contractors of Massachusetts, Burlington.

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