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President's message: Hope and opportunity on the horizon

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There's no question, these are challenging times for our industry. Competition for work is as tough as we've ever seen. Unemployment keeps climbing, and many companies have had to part with valuable employees. At the same time, there are glimmers of hope on the horizon. The stock market is trending upwards; credit markets are thawing slightly; and the real estate market is showing signs of life, as first time buyers take advantage of tax credits and low interest rates.

Then, of course, there is the Federal Stimulus. The Stimulus is good news for the construction industry, with its heavy emphasis on "infrastructure." Of course, it is especially good for the "horizontal" side of the industry, with many highway projects already out to bid. While there is less in the Stimulus for construction of buildings, we can be hopeful that some of the funding for affordable housing and energy efficiency upgrades will translate into work for the building trades.

So, while the worst is not yet over, there is reason to hope. And as is often the case, even the worst of times presents opportunity. For many of us, the recession means lower prices for construction materials, equipment and other products and services we need for our businesses. That translates to lower construction costs for owners, too, both public and private. For owners with projects in the pipeline, and available funds, now is a great time to build. Early reports show the Stimulus projects bidding well under-budget.

For ASM, the downturn has presented opportunity as well. With rental rates down, we were able to lease space at One Washington Mall, next to our counsel's office, for ASM's first-ever, office headquarters. For five weeks this spring, our subcontractor members came together to work on our own "shovel ready project" and convert a gutted shell into new offices for ASM. With the expanded space, we will be able to hire a new staff person, to help us better serve our membership - which continues to grow, even in this economy. So, even as we wait for better times for the industry, we are doing our part to stimulate the economy and add jobs. It represents a new milestone for ASM, and as president, I couldn't be more pleased.

We extend special thanks to all the members who worked on the project: A & A Window Products, Capital Carpet, Cheviot Corporation, Coghlin Electrical, Energy Insulation, J & M Brown, JC Cannistraro, Lan-tel Communications, Manganaro Northeast, ML McDonald, SOS, United HVAC, and Wayne J. Griffin Electric. We also extend our appreciation to dozens of other members who have contributed generously to our Building Fund, even in these difficult times. The project is not only a testament to our progress as an association, but more importantly, an investment in ASM's future, and we are grateful to all those who helped make it possible.

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