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ABC Mass. chapter ready to be strong voice for merit contractors

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As Beacon Hill readies for what will be one of the most challenging budget seasons in recent memory, ABC Massachusetts' president Greg Beeman is confident that his organization is well positioned to be a strong voice on behalf of the merit shop contractors despite the challenging economy. "In times of fiscal hardship, excessive taxation, burdensome regulations, and a retreat from free market philosophies will not create greater economic development and employment opportunities in the Commonwealth," Beeman said.

ABC has been the leading voice advocating for merit shop contractors in Massachusetts. According to ABC public affairs director Mike Berry, the slow down in construction projects in Massachusetts has led many to question federal and state policies that favor union only labor. "When times get tough it is easier to notice who is getting the work and who is not. Every carpenter, electrician, and plumber has the right to work in this state. Unfortunately there are those who believe that having a union card should be the only qualification to do so," Berry said.

Recently, the federal stimulus money coming from the Washington D.C., has elicited much debate as the powerful union lobby seeks prevent open shop contractors from bidding on any stimulus funded projects. This policy clashes with the reality that over 80% of the construction workforce in Massachusetts is non-union. ABC believes that both union and non-union contractors should be given equal opportunities to bid on all construction projects, stimulus funded or not.

As the legislative session begins, ABC Massachusetts is ready to represent their membership on the issues important to them. Some of the key pieces of legislation that ABC will be following deal with the state's prevailing wage law, project labor agreements, and the licensing of trades. Beeman is hopeful that fairness for all contractors and blue collar workers will finally be made a priority on Beacon Hill. "In this economy, the debate should not be about merit shops or labor unions," Beeman said. "It should be about getting as many people working again as possible."

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