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WHY UNION APPRENTICESHIPS MATTER

Ask any construction contractor or CEO what keeps them awake at night, the answer more often than not is this: whether they will have enough workers to staff their jobs.

Construction continues to boom, but there are not enough skilled tradespeople to fill the jobs.

The problem is so bad, according to U.S. News and World Report that 91 percent of more than 2,700 contractors, construction managers, builders and trade contractors surveyed in the latest Commercial Construction Index reported having a hard time finding skilled workers.

This shortage is the result of multiple factors. First, the 2008 recession drove hundreds of thousands of workers out of the industry altogether. But just as important, for too long young people have been told that blue-collar work is a dead-end. Instead, schools told them that their only option for career advancement is a four-year college degree.

This has resulted in a dramatic spike of student loan debt. In fact, its quadrupled since the start of 2005 to \$1.48 trillion. And too often, graduates are finding that their degrees no longer mean a decent salary in today's workplace.

It is no wonder that more and more young people are taking a second look at construction as a career option.

With a union apprenticeship like the IBEW's, workers earn while they

learn, working on the job as they train in a craft.

The IBEW, in partnership with our contractor partners in the National Electrical Contractors Association, runs the largest private-sector training program for electrical workers. We provide the best and most technologically advanced apprenticeships in the entire industry.

Union apprenticeship programs like the IBEW's also fill another gap in today's economy: the lack of good paying, middle-class jobs.

Despite record-low unemployment, wages remain stagnant, with a third of all workers making less than \$15 an hour according to the National Employment Law Project. And excellent benefits, like health care and retirement, are getting harder and harder to find in today's economy.

But IBEW members enjoy competitive wages, comprehensive health cover-

age, and pension plans that give them a secure spot in the middle class.

Not only that, they enjoy the best and most comprehensive safety training available, which is especially important in potentially dangerous work like construction.

They make working in electrical construction not just a job, but a career.

The truth is college isn't for everyone. For those students looking for a debt-free alternative that provides an economically secure future, there is no better option than union apprenticeships. And more than ever, North America needs more skilled craftsmen to keep the economy moving forward.

Union apprenticeships: the IBEW's are a win-win for everyone. For those interested in finding out more on how to join an IBEW apprenticeship program in your area, go to www.WePowerAmerica.org.

