

Dan Hendricks Written Testimony.

Mr. Chairman and Senators of the Committee

I would like to introduce you to a debate that has gone on for years in the Construction Trades Community. The debate centers on the title, Journeyworker. Some will tell you the “journey” portion of the word comes from the French word ‘Journee’ meaning, day. They were dayworkers or someone who was paid a wage for a day’s work. Some will tell you the “journey” portion comes from the act of a craftsman, when they had reached a certain skill level, leaving the home of their teacher and journeying to the next village to set up their own business. In both cases these craftspeople had reached a certain skill level to be able to charge a fee for the work they provided or the things they could build. Regardless of which argument is correct, we need more of these people. More of the people with the skill level to build the projects we need and to command a sustainable wage for doing so.

My name is Dan Hendricks. Training Director for the Denver Joint Electrical Apprenticeship and the Western Colorado Joint Electrical Apprenticeship. I started in the US Navy I am here today to talk about the period before a person becomes a Journeyworker. I am here to talk about the time and effort it took to learn those skills and the system set up to train Journeyworkers. There is no better way to learn a skilled trade than in a Registered Apprenticeship. Our own apprentices receive thousands of hours of on-the-job training coupled with hundreds of hours of related instruction before they can be considered Journeyworkers. Both aspects are vital and the interaction of the two are what makes an apprenticeship unique. All our apprentices receive an OSHA 10 card at the beginning of their apprenticeship. This means they have received 12 hours of safety training in the classroom. That classroom training is then reinforced on the job. Our trade can be hazardous and this training and the reinforcement of it can and does save lives.

The contractors who provide the on-the-job training opportunities for our apprentices know this system works. They know when they request an apprentice from the apprenticeship, they can count on getting a quality worker. A worker whose training they had a part in crafting even if that person has not worked for them before. Any contractor regardless of size or contribution level has access to highly trained apprentices. The contractors are partners in developing the

Dan Hendricks Written Testimony.

training the apprenticeship requires. In many cases the apprenticeship can provide training a small, disadvantaged contractor could not afford. Equipment can't be taken out of production for the time it would take to train an apprentice to use it. The apprentice may have however had the opportunity to train with it at the apprenticeship. This makes the apprentice immediately productive. Employers know apprenticeship also leads to greater retention which leads to less retraining. In all it is estimated Registered Apprenticeship returns \$1.46 for every \$1 spent.

In the construction industry it is very hard for contractors to make an investment in the future. All contractors are living on a very thin profit margin. However, the contractors that support my apprenticeships have made that investment. They know if you want Journeyworkers now you needed to invest in apprentices four years ago. Tyson. We find ourselves in the situation we are in due to our society deciding investments in teaching the skilled trades weren't profitable. Can you imagine a citizen of the United States not knowing you could go to college, get a degree in a chosen field, and better your life by doing so? It is simply unthinkable. Yet I speak to people all the time who don't know apprenticeships still exist. Here you have a program where you learn a trade, earn a wage, gain benefits and work toward a lifelong career all at the same time, all without needing to go into debt, and people don't know it exists. Our apprenticeship spends a great deal of time attending high school job fairs and going to community centers and workforce events all in the hopes of recruiting applicants to our program. Invariably each interaction starts with an explanation of what an apprenticeship is. I spend much of my time at these events talking to the counselors and teachers, so they know enough to explain it to future students or clients. If we want Journeyworkers we need to talk about apprenticeships in the same manner we talk about colleges. It's just a different way to a great career.

Our Apprenticeship is currently under capacity. We have room for 600 apprentices. We have 360. Only ten of those are Apprentice Technicians specifically trained in this broadband arena. We could have 60 future Journeyman Technicians training right now. I am sure the country could use an extra 50 technicians trained in fiber-optic splicing, distributed antenna systems, or building and maintaining microwave towers. We have so few because we don't have the jobs to put them on to support and reinforce the training they would receive in the classroom.

Dan Hendricks Written Testimony.

Regardless of the promise of a great career, if there isn't a paycheck to sustain them while they learn their trade then many people must choose a different path. Projects that demand registered apprenticeship utilization are an investment in the future Journeyworkers we all know we need.

Finally, not only are Journeyworkers needed for their skills on the job, but they are also needed to teach the next generation of apprentices. We need to incentivize those who have achieved this skill level to stay in the industry. They should receive a sustainable wage anywhere they choose to work. An apprenticeship completion certificate and a Journeyman card are portable credentials. Armed with these and the other credentials they receive in the apprenticeship, such as BICSI Installer. A Journeyworker who has completed our program can work anywhere in the country. This makes them incredibly valuable as the knowledge and skills go with the Journeyworker wherever they are needed most.