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AGC of America
THE ASSOCIATED GENERAL CONTRACTORS OF AMERICA
Quality People. Quality Projects.



March 6, 2013

The Honorable John Kline
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support H.R. 803, the Supporting Knowledge and Investing in Lifelong Skills Act

Dear Representative Kline:

On behalf of the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC), I am writing in support of the Supporting Knowledge and Investing in Lifelong Skills (SKILLS) Act, which will help reform the nation's job training system by strengthening employer engagement in state and local workforce decisions, as well as giving states and localities more flexibility. A strong and skilled workforce is vital to the construction industry and the nation's economic recovery.

The construction industry is made up of predominantly small employers. In the past, many employers in the industry have had trouble connecting with local workforce investment systems or workforce investment boards (WIBs) due to the structure of the boards and types of training offered locally. However, the SKILLS Act will strengthen the presence and participation of employers on WIBs, and this increased participation by employers will be a welcomed change to the construction industry. Local employers can ensure local job training will address workforce gaps and better fit local population needs.

The construction industry has many unique workforce demands that differentiate it from other industries. The SKILLS Act makes several necessary reforms that include streamlining federal job training programs and focusing on jobs in demand with required evaluation of these programs. The bill also offers easier to access and increased training for potential workers. In addition, the bill would offer training with skill sets that better match the needs and demands of the construction industry.

Under the SKILLS Act Registered Apprenticeship programs, an important training system used by construction contractors, would be better aligned with WIBs as an approved training provider. Apprenticeship is a key program for successful construction industry workers and attracting new entrants to the industry which will become increasingly critical in the coming years as a heavy percentage of current workers retire and even more new workers will be needed as the economy recovers.

AGC looks forward to working with Congress and ensuring barriers against construction training programs from partnering with local WIBs are removed along with offering better access to basic skills training.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey D. Shoaf
Senior Executive Director
Government Affairs