



February 28, 2013

The Honorable John Kline  
Chairman  
Committee on Education & Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable George Miller  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Education & Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Kline and Ranking Member Miller:

On behalf of Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC), a national association with 72 chapters representing 22,000 merit shop construction and construction-related firms, I am writing in support of the Supporting Knowledge and Investing in Lifelong Skills (SKILLS) Act (H.R. 803). This legislation will strengthen our nation's workforce development system and increase employment opportunities by creating a more streamlined approach that focuses on businesses' hiring and training needs.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of wage and salary jobs in the construction industry is expected to grow 19 percent through 2018, while all industries combined are expected to grow 11 percent. ABC believes one of the keys to attracting new workers and retaining current craft professionals is flexible training programs.

Specifically, H.R. 803 will enable small businesses, which create more than 65 percent of all new jobs in America, to continue developing training programs and career opportunities. By serving their communities through local workforce investment boards, which will be enhanced by this legislation, business leaders can become more involved in career development programs and serve as an authority on training, skills and job opportunities in their communities.

Additionally, this legislation will eliminate statutory language included in the Workforce Investment Act that allows green jobs training grants to be accessed only by firms associated with a labor union. Currently, contractors with employees who choose not to be associated with union training providers are effectively barred from accessing federal green jobs training dollars funded by their own taxes. This is grossly unfair to the 87 percent of employees in the construction industry who choose not to be affiliated with a labor organization.

H.R. 803 addresses much needed reform to our country's workforce training system by providing a framework that will consolidate programs and increase the role of business. We appreciate your attention to this important matter, and urge immediate passage of the SKILLS Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K Swearingen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kristen Swearingen  
Senior Director, Legislative Affairs