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The New Jersey Legislature is considering a bill to require all contractors and subcontractors on public works projects to participate in an apprenticeship program for each trade or classification in which they employ craft workers, effectively limiting... [Read more at http://publiccontracting.blogspot.com/](http://publiccontracting.blogspot.com/) »



This article was submitted on December 28, 2009 at 08:48 PM PST

By **Mike Purdy**, Contracts Manager at University of Washington & Principal at Michael E. Purdy Associates
[146 followers](#) | [See Mike's activity](#) »**Comments (10)**

I agree with you, Mike. This is nothing more than organized labor's attempt to engulf all contractors and thereby eliminate free market practices. My friend, Sam Cooke, wrote "Freedom in the Workplace". It is an eye-opening look at organized labor and the tactics they have used throughout the years.

By **Karen Fitze** Marketing Director at Brasher Design
posted 4 days ago
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Encouraging apprenticeship programs for skilled trades people can be a good thing, whether initiated by the trades unions or not. Also, decisions to use union or other contractors on projects varies by location too - most of the NY and NY region of the East Coast use union contractors for most trades especially steamfitters, ironworkers, and electricians. I am not sure if the comments here take that into full account.

By **Charles McSorley** Associate AIA at Coupard Architects & Builders
posted 4 days ago
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To the taxpayers of NJ, lets hope this doesn't get through. Isn't NJ one of the most cashed strapped and overtaxed states in the Union now? Why they would even consider this is crazy. But the bigger picture is political, it has nothing to do with workplace safety or experience. Organized Labor contributes big money to political campaigns, guess where they get the money? By tacking PAC contributions on all the working members weekly paychecks. The more jobs the unions get, the more they contribute. While the taxpayers can expect anywhere from 18-28% more cost for each project.

Open shop contractors have the same capabilities and have access to apprenticeship training through Associated Builders and Contractors. Only they can't take money out of thier employees paychecks every week for political action. Taxpayers and private Owners need to start to become aware of options besides "Union Only". The best value for their dollars is to open projects up to the most experienced contractors regardless of Labor Affiliation.

Open and FAIR competition is what made our country so great. Construction, whether anyone cares to admit it, is what drives the US economy. The only way the majority of the Unions can still be competitive is to eliminate any open shop companies from bidding.

What happened to the land of opportunity (for all)? - It must have been lost in the politicians pockets

By **David Plechner** Design Sales Manager at C.M. Jones Incorporated
posted 4 days ago
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I understand and am aware of the value that unions offer. And yes, I fully understand about the NY area. When the firm I used to work for had to perform in that area, it was a regular practice to call a local non-union organization for notification that a non-union company was going to be present. That way, if there was any sort of trouble (and believe me there was a great deal of intimidation done) they had a local contact for advice/support.

Sam Cooke is a recently retired lawyer who was general counsel to ABC (a merit shop organization), beginning in 1950. I happen to agree with him regarding free enterprise versus compulsory union membership, which is where the New Jersey legislation is heading (through the back door).

That being said, Charles, and on a totally different topic, if you are amenable, perhaps we can get together for a cup of coffee and see if our firms might have room to pursue potential work together.

By [Karen Fitze](#) Marketing Director at Brasher Design
posted 4 days ago
107 followers | [Follow Karen](#) | [See Karen's activity](#) »



I surely know I am not an expert on the subject and given that I work in the residential realm, have not had any direct exposure to this subject.

Nice to see all the viewpoints expressed. I certainly hope 2010 is more promising for us all in the construction industry.

By [Charles McSorley](#) Associate AIA at Coupard Architects & Builders
posted 3 days ago
79 followers | [Follow Charles](#) | [See Charles's activity](#) »



Organized labor had it's time in American history, when it was necessary to protect the labor force in a country that was void of the laws that exist today. Unions have outlived their usefulness and anymore are among the prime causes of companies outsourcing and off-shoring work. Take the UAW as an example, I refer to the "jobs bank" as one of many outrageous concessions that have been forced on the auto industry over the years by the UAW. If New Jersey were smart they would tank this idea right now, don't let the unions continue to badger, hammer and force their way into the labor market any longer. I am from Texas, a "Right to Work" state, even though they are there, unions are not welcome, and for good reason.

By [Richard Frame](#) Construction Quality Control Manager
posted 3 days ago
68 followers | [Follow Richard](#) | [See Richard's activity](#) »



Having led projects from coast to coast, I will just speak from experience; on projects where union labor was mandatory - the cost was exceedingly high and quality of the work was abysmal. I don't see apprentice programs led by these organizations producing anything but more of the same. The same union tactics were a factor in the American automobile industry fiasco. This is the classic definition of insanity; repeating the same mistakes and expecting a different result. That said, however, it doesn't surprise me that N.J. would make it a law...

By [Dean Stanberry](#) Workplace Strategy & Facility Management
posted 3 days ago
241 followers | [Follow Dean](#) | [See Dean's activity](#) »



"Union tactics" says it all.

On my bids unions were allowed to bid. Never, as in NOT ONCE, were their bids competitive, but, oh, those poor apprentices, who worked for almost NOTHING, got no exposure. Many Union shops offer qualitative bids, however it was only on very large projects. Experience is everything, but it comes at a huge cost.

The main reason GM, Ford and Chrysler are BK is that the American workforce is not cost- competitive in their markets, unless forced to compromise. See Airlines, servicing.

I do NOT see unions rushing to rebuild the Detroit they so eagerly destroyed.

By [Quentin Parker](#) architect at Archwork
posted 2 days ago
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I must disagree with any blanket statement regarding the quality of union labor workmanship being "abysmal".

I've worked on many construction jobs in the NYC/New Jersey/PA area with union labor and the quality of work has been fine. Of course there are always specific exceptions and problems....and some unions are more difficult to work with than others.

There is a real problem with availability of trained craft labor. Union apprenticeship programs (again, some are definitely better than others) are one of the few REAL training opportunities out there for craft labor.

What are some other ways can we replenish the skilled labor workforce??

By [Charlie Halboth](#) Project Executive/Project Manager at URS Corp.
posted 1 day ago
20 followers | [Follow Charlie](#) | [See Charlie's activity](#) »

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I respect Mr. Halboth's response; however, my intent was not to make a blanket statement as I was simply speaking from personal experience. Whether it was the general contractor's choice of subs or availability of trained craft labor; either could have led to the poor experienceds.

As for apprenticeship programs, it is still a valid entry vehicle into a trade. What I wonder about is the shift towards lean construction methods with pre-packaged assemblies becoming more commonplace. How will that play with trades that still focus on "from the ground up" construction? Unfortunately I still see more evidence of resistance to change than innovation emanating from union camps.

By [Dean Stanberry](#) Workplace Strategy & Facility Management
 posted 1 day ago
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