



## **REMARKS**

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**To**

**Subcommittee on Reactor and Fuel Cycle Technology**  
**Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future**

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I wish to thank Mr. Domenici and Dr. Peterson, and the entire Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future, for extending to me this invitation to provide the perspective of America's Building Trades Unions on both the role and the capacities of our nation's skilled craft workforce in the revitalization of America's nuclear energy industry.

I will defer to my co-panelists on the questions of governmental action needed to rebuild America's domestic manufacturing capacity, as well as questions concerning the current and future supply of engineers; although I will state for the record that America's Building Trades Unions are in strong support of any and all efforts to re-build a sustainable domestic manufacturing sector that can evolve into an integral source of job growth for American skilled craft workers. For my part, I will focus today on the issues related to the craft workforce projections associated with an expanded nuclear electrical generation portfolio.

First, let me state for the record that Americas' Building Trades Unions are extremely pleased that nuclear power is once again widely understood to play an essential and expanded role in America's energy portfolio if necessary greenhouse gas reductions are to be achieved, and if we are to lessen our dependence upon unstable sources of foreign-supplied energy. And our unions are determined to assist the industry and the Administration to ensure that this comeback is a resounding success story; not only for the electric utility industry, but for the nation as a whole.

But there are critical issues that need to be resolved before any of this success can be realized. It is in addressing these issues that the nuclear industry will benefit from having a reliable and effective partner. Loan guarantees and licensing issues, along with the ability to provide the necessary skilled labor to construct the new generation of nuclear power facilities in a manner that keeps costs under control, are challenges that can best be met through government, labor, and nuclear industry partnership.

Obviously, the availability of the world's safest, most highly trained and productive skilled craft professional workforce is a vital component for the expansion of the nuclear power industry. The training infrastructure is in place and can be scaled upward to the levels of projected demand based on currently docketed license applications. The skilled craft training system that our unions operate in the United States is apprenticeship-based and is maintained by labor-management contributions. Approximately \$1billion is spent each year by that system in direct training expenses. When the wages paid to apprentices for on-the-job training wage are included, the total expenditure each year is approximately \$15 billion.

Our new Nuclear Power Construction Labor Agreement has a training framework that is built on that apprenticeship system, and to it the Agreement adds important enhancements necessary to achieve the level of specialized training required in the exacting nuclear construction industry. For example, the agreement includes

unprecedented language that would allow labor shortages in one craft to be filled with workers from other crafts or from any other credible source. Further, the agreement contains language allowing 100% portability for outage work for the same owner, in order to meet the short-term demands of such outages.

The agreement additionally provides for the use of apprentices and other sub-journeymen classifications in order to contain unit costs and to encourage efficient crew composition.

And finally, the agreement establishes an extraordinary commitment to the development of on-site, or near-site, multi-craft training facilities to ensure a steady supply of skilled workers; to provide specialized training for journeymen and/or apprentices; or to be used by vendors to train and certify workers on the installation of specialized equipment. These facilities can also be used to provide career development to workers recruited from the communities by the owner for operations and maintenance positions necessary to operate and maintain the facility upon completion.

On the labor demand side, according to a 2009 analysis on Design and Construction conducted by Bechtel Power Corporation for a Bi-Partisan Commission, led by Senator Domenici, in which the Building Trades participated, roughly 4,000 skilled craft professionals will be required at peak construction for a new nuclear power plant generating 1600 MW of electricity. There are, according to the Department of Energy, 17 combined operating license (COL) applications embodying the construction of 26 new reactor facilities that have been docketed with the Nuclear Energy Commission (NRC). Accordingly, over 100,000 skilled craft professionals who are trained and certified for nuclear construction work will be required to address the manpower needs posed by those projects currently on the NRC docket. The report to which I refer, and which benefited greatly from Senator Domenici's personal leadership, was completed in 2009 by the National Commission on Energy Policy's Task Force on America's Future Energy Jobs (in which, as I indicated, the Building Trades participated). Among the report's recommendations were the following:

- "Build upon existing programs, including joint labor-management apprenticeship programs."
- "Clarifying and streamlining support for apprenticeships, technical certifications, and on-the-job training for veterans by combining the benefits of the Post-9-11 GI Bill and the Montgomery GI Bill into one program."
- "Communicating that skilled trades are a vital component of the American economy and should be viewed as desirable options for individuals seeking career training."

- “Encourage development of accredited, credential-focused programs that put individuals on a long-term career track. Programs should allow transferability of credits throughout the industry and should develop skills that translate from one program to the next. Programs should issue ‘stackable’ credentials that allow individuals to develop the building blocks of a career in the energy sector.”

Accumulating a pool of highly-skilled, highly-valued and qualified construction workers needed to build nuclear units will no doubt be a challenge. Especially in light of the fact that qualified boilermakers, millwrights, pipefitters, electricians, and ironworkers are expected to be in short supply in some local labor markets. The use of workers from other communities and states (travelers) will no doubt be an important component in addressing project manpower needs for the nuclear build-out.

These and other factors beg the question as to whether or not America’s Building Trades Unions has the capacity to meet this demand.

And the answer to that question is YES, we do have the capacity to meet this demand, and YES, as evidenced from our new Nuclear Power Construction Labor Agreement, we are looking at innovative ways to supplement our current and future capacity in order to address various isolated issues associated with demographics and geography. For example, thinking innovatively and strategically about the necessary steps needed to ensure the development of a safe, productive and qualified workforce in areas that are remote and thinly populated.

In general, America’s Building Trades Unions, in conjunction with our signatory contractors, operates the largest and most effective skilled craft training apparatus in the United States. We have well-equipped training facilities in every medium to large city in the country. And it is important to note, in these days of budgetary concerns, that our training infrastructure is self-supporting and self-sustaining.

Today, our training capacity is significantly underutilized. That is mostly the by-product of the current economic depression in the construction industry. But even in tight labor markets, our training capacity has been under-utilized.

Currently, the biggest problem that we face is on the demand side. The current depression – and I use the term “depression” not recession, because when you have 20% unemployment in the construction industry like we do today, that is a “depression” – is putting us in danger of losing many of our “best and brightest” to other careers and industries. And that encompasses not only skilled construction workers but qualified apprenticeship instructors as well.

So, the question is not whether America’s Building Trades Unions have the capacity to meet the needs of a burgeoning nuclear industry...we do. The question is whether we have the national will to take the necessary steps to quickly move forward with a

national agenda that places a priority on the revitalization of our nation's portfolio of clean power generation sources, including not only nuclear power, but facilities utilizing modern coal technology, and renewable energy sources.

I thank you again for the opportunity to provide this perspective.