



September 15, 2026

The Honorable Rick Allen
Chair
Committee on Education and Workforce
Subcommittee on Health, Employment,
Labor and Pensions
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mark DeSaulnier
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and Workforce
Subcommittee on Health, Employment,
Labor and Pensions
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Allen, Ranking Member DeSaulnier and Members of the Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions:

On behalf of Associated Builders and Contractors, a national construction industry trade association with 67 chapters representing 24,000 members, I thank you for holding today's hearing, "[Out of Touch: When Union Politics Leave Workers Behind](#)." ABC supports the right of every worker to decide whether union representation is right for them and that choice must be free from coercion by unions and employers alike. Respecting workers, however, also means respecting those who choose a career based on merit and ensuring the government does not favor one model of workforce organization over another.

The merit shop philosophy is fundamentally pro-worker. It rewards individual achievement, encourages lifelong learning and allows craft professionals to advance based on their demonstrated skills, experience and performance. This approach benefits workers and employers and expands the nation's construction capacity, all while ensuring taxpayers receive the best value for their infrastructure investments.

One of the clearest examples of the benefits of a merit-driven career is multiskilling, a workforce strategy in which craft professionals develop and demonstrate more than one trade or skill on the jobsite. Multiskilling does not mean every worker performs every task, nor does it diminish specialized expertise or weaken training, safety, or quality. It recognizes that workers qualified to perform more than one type of work should have the opportunity to use those skills.

Rigid single-trade structures can limit that opportunity. A worker may be required to stop and wait for another crew even when that worker is trained and qualified to perform the next task. This creates unnecessary handoffs and delays while preventing craft professionals from gaining experience, remaining productive and demonstrating their readiness for advancement. Multiskilling also offers workers broader career pathways. Multiskilled professionals can qualify for more assignments, remain on projects longer, and pursue additional leadership opportunities. Broader capability makes workers more valuable and gives them greater control over their careers.

New national field research provides compelling evidence of these benefits. The Simplar Foundation, working with researchers from the University of Kansas, Arizona State University and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, recently released [Multiskilling in the U.S. Construction Industry](#), the most comprehensive field-collected dataset on construction multiskilling assembled to date.

Researchers conducted 40 site visits covering 36 projects in 24 states. They observed 60 multiskilled crews comprising 644 workers from 30 contractors and collected 11,407 structured work-sampling observations. Cross-trade work was a routine part of these crews' operations: Workers spent approximately 36% of observed crew time performing tasks outside their primary trade. The average

worker used 2.7 skill classifications (with some using as many as six in one day) and researchers documented 128 unique combinations of trades and skills.

Most importantly, multiskilling allowed workers to spend more time building. Compared with an analytical scenario in which the same work sequence was performed under single-trade restrictions, multiskilled crews achieved a 39% higher share of time spent directly advancing construction work. Researchers also determined that idle and waiting time was 68% lower and that restricting workers to one trade would have required approximately 45% to 72% more workers to construct the same work sequences.

This does not mean workers are expendable. It means qualified workers are more capable. At a time when the construction industry faces a persistent shortage of skilled labor, requiring more workers to complete the same sequence of tasks is neither practical nor sustainable. Multiskilling enables the available workforce to accomplish more while creating stronger career pathways for individual craft professionals.

These findings should inform federal labor policy. Government should not confine workers to unnecessarily narrow classifications, discourage them from acquiring additional skills or prevent them from using verified abilities. Nor should government impose labor arrangements that may limit the workforce flexibility necessary to use multiskilling effectively.

While worker freedom certainly includes the right to organize, it must also include the right to pursue a merit shop career, the right to develop additional skills and the right to use those skills to earn, advance and succeed.

ABC urges Congress to protect a competitive construction marketplace in which union and nonunion contractors can compete based on merit and workers are free to choose the career path that is best for them. Doing so will expand opportunity, strengthen American construction and deliver greater value to taxpayers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kristen Swearingen', written in a cursive style.

Kristen Swearingen
Vice President, Government Affairs