



Statement of Mr. Rick Jarvis

Vice President Field Operations, Morrow-Meadows Corporation

on behalf of the

National Electrical Contractors Association

to the

Subcommittee on Energy and Power
Committee on Energy and Commerce

U.S. House of Representatives

for a hearing on

“Title II: 21st Century Workforce”

April 23, 2015

NECA is the voice of the \$130 billion electrical construction industry that brings power, light, and communication technology to buildings and communities across the U.S. NECA’s national office and 119 local chapters advance the industry through advocacy, education, research and standards development.

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Thank you Chairman Whitfield, Ranking Member Rush, and members of the Subcommittee for inviting me to testify today at this important hearing. On behalf of the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA), we greatly appreciate the opportunity to submit a statement for this hearing on “Title II: 21st Century Workforce”. The committee is to be commended for holding this important discussion regarding employment in the energy industry and the ways to increase the number of skilled workers trained in energy and manufacturing fields.

My name is Rick Jarvis and I serve as Vice President of Field Construction for the Morrow-Meadows Corporation, a premier electrical and data communications contractor on the West Coast. Our company has been delivering quality electrical contracting solutions to customers for over 50 years and our customers count on us to evolve with market needs. Our energy services group offers a range of energy solutions for today’s volatile energy environment, from energy efficiency to alternative energy to power plant design and construction.

Morrow-Meadows is a proud member of the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA). NECA is the voice of the \$130 billion electrical construction industry that brings power, light, and communication technology to buildings and communities across the U.S. Comprised of over 4,500 electrical contracting firms, our organization has 119 local chapters across the country support the electrical contracting industry through advocacy, education, research, and standards development.

Growth and diversification in the energy economy has caused dramatic changes in electrical construction industry. According to recent *Profile of the Electrical Contractor* surveys, the number of electrical contractors performing work on energy construction projects has grown from 46 percent in 2007 to 60 percent today. Across the country, electrical contractors are the market-leading businesses that are providing electrical infrastructure and services to all sectors of the energy industry, including energy efficiency, pipelines, utilities oil and gas, and renewables.

The sophisticated nature of electrical construction requires a highly-skilled, well-rounded workforce. Considering the importance of energy to our national prosperity and security, it is critical that our nation has a workforce that is both sufficient in size and equipped with the skills and technical training necessary to address our nation’s energy needs.

While increased energy production has created tremendous opportunities for the electrical industry, an aging workforce and lack of skilled labor threatens our ability to meet the needs of the market. In fact, the anticipated number of job openings for electricians due to growth and retirement from 2012-2022 is roughly 224,000, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. It takes five-years to train an electrician, which means we must ramp up our efforts to recruit new talent if we are to keep pace with demand.

We appreciate Congress' interest in addressing this skilled worker shortage and hope that the Department of Energy will consider the importance of apprenticeship training programs in addressing the needs of the energy workforce. Our electrical industry apprenticeship program, a joint labor/management venture between NECA and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) has given participants the opportunity to learn the electrical industry, get paid good wages, and receive health care and retirement benefits for over 70 years. Programs like this present tremendous opportunities for all Americans, including minorities and women. Actively promoting skilled trades is in the best interest of the government, industry and the economy.

Training workers with a valuable, skilled trade creates employment opportunities for the trainee. It also ensures that our nation has flexible workforce available to adapt to emerging trends. Energy work often requires additional training, but that training requires considerably less resources when building upon a highly skilled base. It is not necessary to train a new workforce when a new technology emerges—for example, an electrician is equipped to handle a solar installation. It is unnecessary and shortsighted to train someone in a single technology.

I, for one, am an example of what an Apprenticeship Program can do for a person and the opportunities for advancement it can provide.

After high school, I worked several different jobs before entering a four-year IBEW/NECA electrical apprenticeship program in 1982. During the course of my training, I earned college credits and learned the difference between a job and a career. After completing my apprenticeship, I rose from a Journeyman electrician to Foreman, then to General Foreman. In 1991, I was promoted to the General Field Superintendent for the Morrow Meadows' San Diego branch office. Four years later, I was promoted again, this time to the General Field Superintendent of their corporate division in Los Angeles, CA, where I now hold the position of Vice President of Field Construction.

During my apprenticeship, I served as the apprentice representative at the monthly meetings of our local Joint Apprenticeship Committee, the board of trustees charged with running the apprenticeship program. I have remained committed to serving the apprenticeship program as a management trustee Los Angeles Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee I currently hold the position of Joint Chair and Secretary. I also serve as a management trustee on the IBEW/Local 40 Joint Apprenticeship Committee in Hollywood, CA and was recently appointed as a management trustee on the CA Statewide Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee.

About the Electrical Training ALLIANCE

The electrical training ALLIANCE (previously called NJATC) was created over 70 years ago as a joint training program between the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW). Today, the electrical training ALLIANCE has developed into the largest apprenticeship and training program of its kind, having trained over 350,000 apprentices to journeyman status through local affiliate programs.

The electrical training ALLIANCE aims to provide the electrical construction industry with the most highly trained workforce possible, and has developed a model for 21st Century workforce development in the process. It consists of 300 joint apprenticeship and training centers in the United States and Canada, over 100 electrical training centers, industry training partners and a vast network of public and private educational institutions from secondary school level to the university level. There is at least one training center in each state and each training centers offers courses uniquely designed for the location.

Apprentices receive at least 8,000 hours of on-the-job training and 900 hours of classroom time over a five-year period. They learn technical skills while training on the job, while trade-related classroom training produces competency in basic and specialized skills. The Alliance incorporates advanced technology into all aspects of training, including offering active learning, physical and virtual labs, and an online learning management system. This blended learning approach enables students to continue training remotely, bridging the gap between an apprenticeship and learning in the classroom.

The electrical training ALLIANCE provides students with both a solid foundation and flexibility. The core curriculum establishes the base skills needed to be an IBEW/NECA Journey-Level Worker while advanced studies courses provide greater latitude to local training centers to teach the applicable skills relevant to their market. Local training centers determine alternative training paths to customize its workforce to meet the specific market demands of contractors and customers. This approach facilitates a flexible workforce that is able to meet current needs and quickly learn emerging trends.

The electrical training ALLIANCE also develops and provides courses of study for upgrading journey-level worker skills so that the local JATCs can keep their Journey-Level Worker workforce up-to-date on the newest technologies. The electrical training ALLIANCE works directly with equipment manufacturers and technology developers of a variety of tools, equipment and supplies. Once a new training need has been identified, the electrical training ALLIANCE designs an appropriate training course, provides instructor training and distributes the training materials to share with their workforce.

Skills certifications can be mapped to career pathways throughout many sectors, transitioning workers who need to add new skills for new jobs, and current workers who need to upgrade skills in order to adapt to new technologies or business processes.

Addressing the Workforce Shortage

NECA and IBEW are actively working to address skilled workforce shortage issues. In addition to a hands on community recruitment approach, the Los Angeles NECA Chapter, like many local training programs around the country uses a variety of advertising and recruitment mechanisms to educate young adults and other interested individuals about the career opportunities that the electrical construction industry has to offer and encourage them to join the trades. Advertisements funded jointly by NECA and the IBEW, are placed in local newspapers, on social media and local television stations. The industry also recruits at local job fairs held in high schools, vocational colleges and throughout the local communities. NECA National has also hired a Director of Workforce Development to take a proactive approach on a national level.

SUPPORT FOR TITLE II: 21st CENTURY WORKFORCE

NECA supports this title of the bill as well as the Committee's efforts to advance its comprehensive energy legislation.

Specifically, we appreciate the Committee's interest in increasing enrollment in training and apprenticeship programs. We look forward to working with the Department of Energy to raise awareness about our program promote apprenticeships as an important, viable career option.

CONCLUSION

Increasing the availability of skilled workers is crucial to the growth of the energy sector, and the apprenticeship infrastructure provided by the construction trades is a sure-fire bet for success. It is a wheel that does not need to be reinvented.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify at this very important hearing. NECA applauds the Committee's efforts to support the development of a highly skilled workforce.