



MINNESOTA PIPE TRADES ASSOCIATION

Affiliate of the United Association
Composed of Journeyman and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry
Of the United States and Canada
State Federation of Labor – A.F.L.-C.I.O.

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Duluth-Detroit Lakes
Plumbers and Pipefitters
Local #11

Minneapolis-St. Cloud
Plumbers
Local #15

Minneapolis-St. Cloud
Pipefitters
Local #539

Minneapolis-St. Paul
Sprinkler Fitters
Local #417

Minneapolis
Gas Workers
Local #340

Moorhead
Plumbers and Pipefitters
Local #300

Rochester
Plumbers and Pipefitters
Local #6

St. Paul – Mankato
Plumbers
Local #34

St. Paul – Mankato
Pipefitters
Local #455

Virginia
Plumbers and Pipefitters
Local #589

Road Sprinkler Fitters
Local #669
District 28

April 28, 2021

The Honorable Eric Pratt
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 3219
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Mohamud Noor
379 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senator Pratt and Representative Noor,

On behalf of the Minnesota Pipe Trades Association, I offer the following observations regarding a number of items to be considered by the conference committee.

Helmets to Hard Hats

Senate Omnibus Article 1, Section 3, Subd.3 (e) (22.3-22.20)
House Omnibus Article 7, Section 2, Subd.3 (e) (152.9-152.26)

Helmets to Hard Hats is one of the most successful veterans' re-integration programs in existence.

The partnership between the construction trades and the military is a natural one, as many of the skills needed to be a successful soldier, sailor, or Marine make for a successful construction trades professional.

Moreover, no other sector of the economy has more veterans in their ranks than ours.

The Construction Careers Foundation is an excellent administrator and the new executive director, Justin Rost, is a dynamic, passionate, innovative leader who has taken the program to a new level.

As you heard in committee testimony, Helmets to Hard Hats has expanded its footprint, strengthened partnerships with other veterans' support groups, and participates in issues beyond employment, such as mental health initiatives.

While I am appreciative of the program receiving funding in both bills, The Minnesota Pipe Trades Association prefers the House position, as it fully funds the program and eliminates the need for a cross-subsidy.

Safe and Skilled Workforce Act

Senate Omnibus: N/A

House Omnibus: Article 8, Section 12 (162.18-163.29)

We strongly support this legislation, and recent events regarding the Marathon refinery in Saint Paul Park clearly demonstrate the need for it.

Having said that, I want to be clear that this legislation isn't a response to any one incident or any one situation that may be in the news.

It is universally acknowledged that apprenticeship training programs represent excellence in workforce development and implement best-in-class safety and skill curricula that make construction trades members the best in the world with respect to productivity, safety, efficiency, and quality.

Put another way, apprenticeship requirements are excellent public policy, especially in inherently dangerous work location like petroleum refineries.

I have heard legislators on many occasions praise apprenticeship programs, whether on tour at one of our JATC's, in committee testimony, or during individual meetings with trade union leaders or during Day on the Hill events. This legislation is a reasonable, common sense extension of that public policy.

High-Rise Fire Suppression

Senate Omnibus: N/A

House Omnibus: Article 8, Section 21 (166.14-168.4)

Fire-fighting and public safety professionals agree that high-rise buildings should have automatic sprinkler systems. Furthermore, there is no dispute among these professionals that these systems save lives.

While the tragic 2019 high-rise fire in Minneapolis brought this issue, once again, to the fore, these kind of fires happen all too often and will continue to happen.

The State Fire Marshal Division Report on the Minneapolis High Rise Fire concluded:

*It is the SFMD's position that all high-rise buildings should be protected with fire sprinkler systems. Had this building been protected with fire sprinklers, **it is the opinion of the SFMD that no loss of life would have occurred.***

It should be noted that these types of fires are especially dangerous for the first responders who are tasked to fight these fires and rescue citizens. Carrying fire-fighting equipment up numerous flights of stairs into flame and smoke is a fire fighter's nightmare.

We are pleased to join with our public safety partners in supporting this legislation.

These tragic deaths are absolutely avoidable. Installing fire-suppression systems is the best way to do that.

As always, I and my lobbying team are available to answer questions and provide any background or supporting documentation you may need.

I appreciate your consideration of our priorities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Ybarra II", is written over a horizontal line.

David Ybarra II
President
Minnesota Pipe Trades Association

Cc: Sen. Jason Rarick
Cc: Sen. Karin Housley
Cc: Sen. Rich Draheim
Cc: Sen. Kent Eken
Cc: Rep. Rob Ecklund
Cc: Rep. Liz Olson
Cc: Rep. Kaela Berg
Cc: Rep. Rod Hamilton
Cc: Kate Perushek, MN Department of Labor and Industry
Cc: Andrew Eilers, Senate committee administrator
Cc: Travis Reese, House committee administrator