

INTERNATIONAL UNION OF OPERATING ENGINEERS

LOCAL NO. 49, 49A, 49B, 49C, 49D, 49E, 49L
MINNESOTA • NORTH DAKOTA • SOUTH DAKOTA

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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 International Union of Operating Engineers Local 49, I'm pleased to offer brief commentary on items of interest under consideration by your conference committee.

Operating Engineers Career Pathway

Senate Omnibus Article 1, Section 3, Subd.3(f) (Lines 22.21 – 23.14)
House Omnibus Article 7, Section 2, Subd.6(d) (Lines 154.11 – 154.29)

This exciting and successful partnership answers one of the most frequent questions I get from legislators: “What are you guys doing to partner with our public school to expose young people to trade union careers?” While we have many other programs and partnerships, Local 49’s partnership with the MN Virtual Academy is evidence of our work.

Over the past few years, I have been proud to participate in the sea change in attitudes regarding careers in the construction trades. There has been a broad, bipartisan recognition that a college degree is not the only way to unlock a rewarding career that supports a family and provides great benefits, excellent pay, and the satisfaction of helping build and maintain our infrastructure. This public-private partnership has been valuable in reaching high school students to show the tremendous benefits of this career path.

These programs are an important gateway to our apprenticeship training programs, the “gold standard” in workforce development and the springboard to a great career. They are also an incredibly important tool as Local 49 seeks to recruit and retain a workforce that reflects all Minnesota communities.

Helmets to Hard Hats

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

Helmets to Hardhats 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 its 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'm appreciative of the program receiving funding in both bills, Local 49 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)

Local 49 strongly supports this legislation, and recent events regarding the Marathon refinery in Saint Paul Park clearly demonstrate the need for it.

I would respectfully draw your attention to a separate letter I wrote on the subject which has also been sent to conferees, staff, and interested parties.

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

I appreciate your consideration of our priorities.

Sincerely,



Jason George
Business Manager
International Operating Engineers Local 49

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