

# Building Contractors Association of New Jersey **NATIONAL LABOR NEWS**

March 2012

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## ***BCANJ's Quarterly Labor Update***

*Building Contractors Association of New Jersey publishes the **National Labor News** quarterly as an insert in our monthly Update in March, June, September and December. We will continue to focus on local and state issues via our monthly Update and regular bulletins. We welcome your comments.*

### **DHS Issues Latest Statistics on Illegal Immigrants in US**

The Department of Homeland Security issued a report this month estimating the number of illegal immigrants in the US as of January 2011 at 11.5 million, slightly lower than the January 2010 estimate of 11.6 million. New Jersey's illegal immigrant population is estimated at 420,000, representing 4% of the total and ranking the state at #7 in the country in illegal immigrant population behind California, Texas, Florida, New York, Illinois and Georgia.

### **State Updates on Labor Issues**

**In January, a judge in Louisiana** overturned a state law that required private contractors bidding on public works contracts to verify the employment eligibility of all employees, not just new hires, saying the Louisiana law conflicted with the federal E-Verify law. AGC of Louisiana had filed a lawsuit against the governor claiming the conflict.

**As of late last year, four states** (including Louisiana) required all employers to use E-

Verify, 10 states required state agencies and contractors to use it, five states had a mix of requirements, four states (including New Jersey) had legislation proposed, one state repealed E-Verify legislation, and 26 states plus the District of Columbia had no E-Verify legislation passed or proposed.

**In February, Indiana** became the nation's 23<sup>rd</sup> right-to-work state, the first in 10 years and the only right-to-work state in the so-called "Rust Belt" of the Midwest.

### **NLRB Now Has Full Board**

As we reported in the January Update, President Obama recess-appointed three new members to the National Labor Relations Board, bringing the Board to its full complement of five members. In February, NLRB Chairman Mark Pearce said he plans to push for new rules that would aid union organizing, including use of electronic filings and expedited timetables for certain procedures. Such rules would expand the regulations finalized in December, before the full Board was named, that speed up the union election process once the unions have collected

enough employee signatures to bring union representation to a vote. Those regulations go into effect April 30. Business groups such as the US Chamber of Commerce oppose the December rule and others that make it easier for unions to organize new members.

## ***FINAL REMINDER:***

### ***NLRB Poster Deadline***

***The new NLRB poster must be displayed in most private-sector firms by April 30, 2012.*** For complete details, including a three-page fact sheet from the National Labor Relations Board, access Bulletin #86-11 in the “Members Only” section of the BCANJ website, [www.bcanj.com](http://www.bcanj.com). The poster is available on the NLRB website at [www.nlr.gov/poster](http://www.nlr.gov/poster).

## **National Construction Industry Statistics: January & February**

***Construction materials prices*** rose sharply in February after several months of mostly moderate increases. The price index for construction inputs, which includes diesel fuel and equipment tires, rose nearly a full percentage point, 0.9%, more than double the 0.4% we saw in January. In contrast, the price index for finished nonresidential buildings remained the same for warehouse, school and office buildings, and fell 0.2% for industrial buildings. Diesel fuel, which rose 3%, drove up delivery and operating costs as well. Wallboard and other gypsum products rose 5.1% following a 5.9% rise in January. Copper and brass mill shapes were up 5.9%, architectural coatings such as paint were up 10.5%, plastic construction products were up

2.3%, aluminum mill shapes were up 1.9%, paving mixtures and blocks were up 2.5% and steel mill products were up 0.6%. Concrete product prices were among the few to fall, dropping 0.1% in February.

***Construction employment*** fell in 111 out of 337 metro areas between January 2011 and January 2012, rose in 169 and stayed the same in 57. New Jersey’s Atlantic City-Hamilton metro area saw the greatest percentage gain in new construction jobs in the country, up 45% (1,700 jobs).

Statewide, construction employment was up 3% with a total of 3,900 jobs gained. However, the building construction employment segment statewide, according to the NJ Department of Labor & Workforce Development, fell from 26,100 workers in January 2011 to 25,500 in January 2012 (a loss of 600 jobs). AGC of America’s Chief Economist Ken Simonson reports that, nationwide, an uptick in private construction work was offset by a decrease in public works projects.

## **Union Construction**

### **Membership Rose in 2011**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in January that union membership in private-sector construction in 2011 rose nearly a percentage point over 2010. Union roles hit 14% in 2011 (874,000 union members among 6.2 million construction employees), up from 13.1% in 2010 (801,000 union members out of 6.1 million construction workers).