

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

December 2010

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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.*

### **NJ Senator Sponsors New Immigration Bill**

In late September, New Jersey's Sen. Robert Menendez introduced S-3932, a comprehensive immigration bill co-sponsored initially by Sen. Patrick Leahy of Vermont, and joined by Sen. Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania in mid-November. The bill is currently awaiting action by the Senate Judiciary Committee. AGC of America expressed concern about a proposal in the bill to make it easier to cite employers for violations even if they did not "know" they had hired unauthorized workers. AGC/A also found the bill lacks a workable future visa program and provides an incentive for unauthorized workers to file employment claims by offering a temporary work authorization.

### **States Take On Immigration Issue**

Impatient with waiting for a federal immigration overhaul, six states have declared they will propose their own legislation similar to Arizona's. Some of the key provisions of the Arizona law have been put on hold by federal court, but Georgia, Mississippi, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and South Carolina are expected to introduce bills early in the new year. Among the proposals are measures limiting or barring illegal immigrant access to

public colleges, punishing employers who hire illegal immigrants, and allowing seizure of vehicles and property used to transport or harbor such immigrants. The most unusual proposal comes from a joint effort among lawmakers in Arizona, Oklahoma, Missouri and Pennsylvania to pass laws denying American citizenship to children born of illegal immigrants in those states. While all these efforts are led by Republicans, other Republicans disagree with the movement, fearing the stance will hurt the party's chances to win Latino voters.

### **I-9 Workshop Explains Form Completion Process**

Earlier this month, BCANJ and AGC of NJ jointly hosted a workshop led by Department of Homeland Security personnel to review the process for correctly completing the US Citizenship and Immigration Services' I-9 Employment and Eligibility Verification Form. DHS issues severe penalties when the I-9 forms are not properly completed. More than 50 people attended the workshop.

### **Ironworkers President Retires**

Ironworkers General President Joe Hunt announced his retirement, effective February 1, 2011. General Secretary Walter Wise will succeed him.

## **New Tax Relief Act Extends Business Benefits**

In Bulletin #107-10, we sent a summary provided by Associate Member Jacoby Donner PC of the tax advantages and incentives that were added or extended in the Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization and Job Creation Act of 2010. President Obama signed the act into law this month. Access the bulletin on the "Members Only section of the website, [www.bcanj.com](http://www.bcanj.com).

## **Construction Unions Organized More Workers This Year**

The Bureau of National Affairs reports six of the seven most active construction unions, including some of the building trade unions, organized more workers in the first half of 2010 over the first six months of 2009:

- Carpenters organized 309 workers... up from 116
- Laborers organized 731... up from 12
- Plumbers and Pipefitters organized 52... up from 21
- Painters organized 380... up from 325
- Operating Engineers organized 359... one up from 358
- Electrical Workers organized 887... up from 559
- Teamsters organized 5,594... down from 6,605

These same unions averaged a 64.2% win rate in representation elections in the first half of 2010, down slightly from the first of 2009 when the win rate hit 65.5%, but higher than the second half of 2009, when the rate slipped to 60.5%.

## **9/11 Healthcare Bill Signed Into Law**

President Obama signed into law the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act, one of the last bills passed before Congress recessed in December. The Act, named for a police officer who died of a respiratory disease contracted during 9/11 rescue operations, provides aid to survivors of the September 11, 2001, attacks and the first responders who became ill while working in the ruins of the World Trade Center. The bill's \$4.2 billion cost will be paid by a fee assessed to some of the foreign companies that get federal procurement contracts.

## **Construction Materials Prices Continue to Rise**

As measured in early December, futures prices on copper hit \$4.20, up 35% over last year and above even the 2008 peak. Diesel fuel averaged \$3.23 per gallon, up 18% over last year. Also, Nucor Steel announced this month that concrete reinforcing bars, merchant bars and structural products will increase \$45 per ton after the first of the new year.

## **Unemployment Rates Remain High**

Nationally, construction unemployment rose sharply from October to November to 18.8%, and overall unemployment climbed from 9.6 to 9.8%. New Jersey saw a ray of hope with an uptick of 4,500 construction jobs in November, making it the top state in terms of percentage gains. However, in overall unemployment, New Jersey ranked among the bottom 10 states in November, at 9.2%. As we head into 2011, the national unemployment rate is not expected to drop noticeably, especially using predictors such as the GDP, which should grow slightly but not at a rate needed to dramatically increase jobs.