

Building trades sounds alarm on DOL apprenticeship proposal

North America's Building Trades Unions (NABTU) is sounding the alarm over proposed changes to how apprenticeship training programs are created and operate.

In June, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) proposed regulations to implement Industry-Recognized Apprenticeship Programs (IRAPs). Unlike the Registered Apprenticeship model — where program sponsors must meet certain requirements in order for the DOL to recognize their program — the new IRAP system will give private organizations such as employers and trade associations free rein to create new watered-down standards and self-certify subpar programs.

Registered apprenticeship programs are used in the construction industry and are widely considered an effective training strategy that leads to quality employment, equips workers with job-relevant skills, and helps employers meet their current and future workforce needs. NABTU and local building trades unions across the country are concerned

second-rate IRAP certifications will undermine the gold-standard that Registered Apprenticeship programs have attained.

The proposed IRAP regulation does provide a temporary exemption for the construction industry, but that could change when the DOL issues its final version later this year.

“While we applaud the government’s interest in expanding apprenticeship opportunities in new industries, IRAPs have no place in construction,” said NABTU President Sean McGarvey. “We need to make sure that when the final regulations come out, the construction industry exclusion is permanent.”

McGarvey served on a presidential task force that was born out of President Donald Trump’s July 2017 Executive Order to expand apprenticeship in America. The task force’s mission was to identify strategies and proposals to promote apprenticeships, especially in sectors where apprenticeship programs are insufficient. Joseph Sellers Jr., general president of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers,

**Comment period ends
Monday, Aug. 26, 2019**

**YOUR VOICE MATTERS!
SAY NO TO
IRAPS**

**SUBMIT A PUBLIC COMMENT
AGAINST A RULE THAT
WOULD HURT MILLIONS OF
BUILDING TRADES WORKERS
AND THE INTEGRITY OF THE
CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY!**

**NABTU has set up a submittal page at:
<https://bit.ly/2Z2iHcV>**

and Doug McCarron, general president of the Carpenters Union, also served on the task force.

There were also members on the task force who argued that registered programs were too restrictive and included too much

administrative red tape, which has kept many companies from offering such formal work-based training. Given the Trump Administration’s history of deregulating safety and environmental regulations in the workplace, the building trades aren’t taking the

exemption for granted.

NABTU and local building trades unions across the country are calling on all union workers, their families, and friends to submit comments to the DOL asking them to “keep IRAPs OUT of construction!”

A 60-day public comment period ends Aug. 26, 2019. NABTU has set up a submittal page at <https://bit.ly/2Z2iHcV>.

You can mail comments to: Adele Gagliardi, Administrator, Office of Policy Development and Research, U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Avenue NW, Room N-5641, Washington, D.C., 20210.

On Aug. 13, U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer and Multnomah County Commissioner Jessica Vega Pederson held a press conference at the Multnomah County Courthouse under construction in downtown Portland to denounce IRAPs. Joining them was Labor Commissioner Val Hoyle and union leaders from the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council, its affiliated locals, and other unions.



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