

CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Prepare the Next Generation of Skilled Construction Workers through Perkins Act Reauthorization

Action Needed:

Urge the Senate to support Perkins reauthorization. The House passed the Strengthening Career & Technical Education for the 21st Century Act, H.R. 5587, earlier this year. H.R. 5587 included all of the AGC-supported reforms outlined here. It's time for the Senate to act.

Background:

- AGC contractors are reporting difficulty finding qualified professionals to work in craft positions, which is the bulk of the construction workforce. The craft worker shortage comes at a time when contractors view the pipeline for recruiting and training new workers as poor. As a result, AGC is looking for measures that will make it easier for schools to establish programs to train future workers. The Perkins Act is one measure that will help to close the skills gap.

AGC Message:

- **Perkins Should Align Education with Local and Regional Economic Needs.** States need flexibility in how they select and fund high-quality training programs, as the most successful form of engagement with employers varies widely from region to region. The states should also be required to report on the mechanisms used for alignment and how they are consulting with employers and industries, without specific mandates, which will provide the ability to evaluate the success of programs across the country.
- **Perkins Should Encourage and Promote Work-Based Learning.** The bill should define work-based learning – an essential element of effective career & technical education – that recognizes the varying arrangements used across industries and local education authorities should assist in facilitating work-based learning opportunities. The sustained interaction between students and industry professionals in real workplace settings are the best environments to foster a career in the construction industry.
- **Perkins Should Take Steps to Spur the Development and Acceptance of Industry-Recognized Credentials.** Industry credentials are a proven method to distinguish applicants who have the requisite skills for working in the construction industry. The bill should also distinguish between industry credentials and other postsecondary awards.
- **Increase Career & Technical Education Funding.** Given the higher graduation and job placement rates of career and technical programs and the expanding demand for construction jobs, Congress needs to increase funding for Perkins. Additional flexibility and a modest funding increase will make it easier for school districts to expand their career and technical program offerings.