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Ranking Member Gerald E. Connolly
Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Information Technology, and Government Innovation
Hearing on “Cutting Competition in Contracting:
The Administration’s Pricey Project Labor Agreement Mandate”
June 27, 2024

I have seen firsthand, in my district, what happens when Project Labor Agreements, or PLAs, are excluded from construction projects because of unfounded scare tactics and attacks on labor unions. For more than two decades, I supported and helped advance the Silver Line extension of Metro to Dulles Airport. This construction project was vital to regional mobility and our local economy.

Phase 2 of the Silver Line’s construction—performed without a PLA because of the partisan, anti-labor actions of Republicans in my state—suffered quality and safety setbacks that led to litigation, delays, and cost increases. There were schedule problems from the start; more than 400 concrete rail ties had flaws that could cause tracks to tilt outwards; more than 1,700 defective concrete panels were installed; and a company falsified records after skirting quality-control requirements which resulted in the company being barred from working on federal construction projects for three years.

The project directors blamed the contractors. The contractors blamed their subcontractors. But who should really be blamed were the Republican leaders in Virginia who prevented state agencies from requiring Project Labor Agreements on Phase 2.

If a PLA was in place for Phase 2, as it was for Phase 1, I can’t imagine there would have been such magnitude of problems.

Which is why I applaud the pro-worker policies of the Biden Administration. Last week, the Administration issued a final rule to address the workforce skills shortages within the construction industry. The final rule requires that infrastructure projects funded through the Inflation Reduction Act pay prevailing wages to the workers on the projects. This means good-paying, high-quality jobs for local workers in communities across this nation.

President Biden’s infrastructure investments are revitalizing and creating local jobs in every congressional district. The Chairwoman, for example, praised the \$26 million dollar federal grant her district received for public transportation investments from the Inflation Reduction Act—despite voting against the bill.

In December 2023, the Biden Administration finalized a rule to ensure that large scale federal construction projects have PLAs in place to make sure they are completed on time and on budget. That is because PLAs have a proven track record of success. PLAs promote worker safety and guarantee a well-trained, highly skilled workforce. PLAs can help prevent the kind of setbacks we saw in the case of Metro's Silver Line Phase 2.

Using PLAs can also attract new private-sector businesses. Just ask Micron, who is using a PLA to construct a \$15 billion dollar semiconductor manufacturing plant in Boise, Idaho. But had Idaho not built up its local construction workforce through decades of federal investments from Department of Energy PLA construction projects, Micron may not have had a ready-made workforce in which to invest. And the good paying, local jobs that come with Micron's construction project would not have materialized. These investments are how we rebuild communities and the middle class.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today, including Mr. Jacob Snyder, the Chief Operating Officer at Enerfab. Enerfab is a construction company that knows PLAs offer real investments into workers and communities while completing construction jobs to the highest of quality. Enerfab uses PLAs on 90% of their projects— both government and private sector contracts. And Mr. Snyder has the unique qualification of being the only witness here today who negotiates and uses PLAs. I look forward to hearing his insights.

Thank you, I yield back.

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