

Haslam, Construction Industry Leaders Announce Launch Of "Go Build Tennessee" Initiative



Governor Bill Haslam joined construction industry associations on Wednesday to announce the launch of a new statewide skilled trades education and recruitment initiative, Go Build Tennessee. The effort will address skilled labor shortages through targeted education and image enhancement to inform and inspire the next generation of future skilled workers.

"Tennessee is often ranked among the best for economic development and business climate. To remain competitive we need to prepare our citizens to meet workforce demands, including the demands in the construction industry. Go Build Tennessee will encourage young people to consider careers in the skilled trades and inform the next generation of workers about career opportunities and training programs available to them," Governor Haslam said.

Officials said, "America depends on its skilled tradesmen – and right now all across the country the construction industry is getting older and smaller. In Tennessee, the average age of a construction worker is over 50 years old, and for every five workers who leave the industry, only one replaces them. Construction industry labor shortages, often referred to as a 'skills gap,' were compounded by the national recession beginning around 2007. Without action to attract future tradesmen to the construction industry, our nation faces severe problems in any effort to build and maintain its infrastructure."

The purpose of Go Build Tennessee is to keep the workforce strong and steady, and that starts by inspiring young people to consider a career in the skilled trades. The initiative, which launched online on Wednesday at www.gobuildtennessee.com and also on television, seeks to address misperceptions about the industry by educating the public about the labor shortages and highlighting opportunities in the construction craft trades.

“Today’s launch is the result of employers, industry association, educators and our legislature, working together to address an ongoing industry crisis. Go Build Tennessee’s outreach efforts will extend throughout the state to better engage and educate students – and their ‘influencers’ – about career and training opportunities in the construction industry,” said David Stansell, president of Go Build Tennessee and President of Stansell Electric Company located in Nashville.

Research indicates that young people simply are not considering the construction trades as a viable career choice. As a result of both misperceptions and misunderstandings, students from junior high school through junior college, who are prime candidates for careers in the construction trades, seldom even investigate these career possibilities. Because perceptions don’t change overnight, Go Build employs a robust public relations education effort that reaches and interacts with students at multiple levels with one seamless message.

“In developing the Go Build initiative, we realized that a short term marketing blitz would never cause a paradigm shift in people’s thinking about the skilled trades,” said Bob Woods, CEO/president of Go Build. “And to truly change perceptions, we needed to find a way to appeal to millennials’ sense of purpose. So instead of lecturing them about career opportunities, we choose to inspire them around a rallying cry: Go Build.”

As part of a sustained public relations campaign, Go Build Tennessee deploys its message across a variety of mediums – including TV, print and digital advertising, an engaging website, grassroots outreach and educator tools such as trade videos, classroom materials and more.

“Go Build seeks to complement existing career technical education and apprenticeship training outreach efforts in order to recruit the next generation of skilled workers. Our goal is to do more than just publicize the problem – we’re actively working to close the skills gap,” said Mr. Stansell.

Go Build Tennessee was enacted through legislation sponsored by Rep. Ryan Williams and Sen. Jim Tracy, with industry support from the Associated Builders and Contractors, the Associated General Contractors, the Home Builders Association, and the Tennessee Road Builders Association. The program is administered by a 501(c)(3) nonprofit comprised of representatives from commercial, industrial, residential, and road building contractors and subcontractors. The \$3.5 million campaign is funded solely through industry collected fees and will be administered by a 501(c)(3) nonprofit comprised of representatives from commercial, industrial, residential, and road building contractors and subcontractors.

Go Build, which was also launched in Alabama 2010 and Georgia in 2012, has shown to have a significant impact on apprenticeship applications and first year career technical education enrollments. The program has been endorsed by the United States Department of Labor, and national ABC, AGC, CURT, CII and the Trimmer Foundation organizations.