

# North American Concrete Alliance

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July 12, 2019

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20515

## **Infrastructure Package Must Also Invest in America's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Workforce**

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leaders McCarthy and Schumer:

The North American Concrete Alliance (NACA) looks forward to working with you to advance legislation that will make much-needed investments in our nation's infrastructure. An efficient and well-functioning transportation network is essential to positioning our country for robust economic growth and global competitiveness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, we urge you to ensure that any infrastructure package also includes initiatives to recruit and train the next generation of construction industry technical talent.

NACA is a coalition of 12 concrete-related national trade associations, including the American Concrete Pavement Association, the American Concrete Pipe Association, the American Concrete Pressure Pipe Association, the American Concrete Pumping Association, the Concrete Reinforcing Steel Institute, the Concrete Foundations Association, the National Concrete Masonry Association, the National Precast Concrete Association, the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association, the Portland Cement Association, the Precast/Pre-stressed Concrete Institute, the Tilt-Up Concrete Association. Our members are involved in the construction of highways, airports, bridges, ports, and underground infrastructure.

According to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), there were 7.2 million construction jobs in the United States in July 2018. With a median annual wage of \$45,820 in 2017, construction jobs on average pay 20 percent more than the average median wage for all industries. However, many of these well-paying jobs remain unfilled. Skilled laborers, technicians, operators, engineers, truck drivers and other trained workers are all in short supply. BLS reported 263,000 construction job openings last year. Through 2026, BLS projects faster-than-average employment growth in the industry, meaning that, if unaddressed, the problem will only get worse and it will take longer to realize the benefits of massive additional investment in America's infrastructure.

The skills gap has many different causes and will not be solved solely by the federal government; schools, employers and government must also work to address the problem at the state and local level. However, there are important steps Congress can take to ease the pressure. For example, the bipartisan Building U.S. Infrastructure by Leveraging Demands for Skills (BUILDS) Act (H.R. 2831 and S. 1517) would provide grants to industry or sector partnerships that encourage collaboration to improve training, improve on-the-job learning opportunities, encourage mentorships, improve awareness about careers and provide resources to help workers obtain and hold jobs.

NACA also supports incentivizing the offering and undertaking of career and technical education, with an emphasis on trades and on-the-job training to develop marketable skills to meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. Congress should also expedite the establishment and approval of apprenticeship programs by the Departments of Labor and Education. Apprenticeships provide employees the opportunity to gain skills in an industry and at a company seeking to place them into good paying jobs.

Additionally, in an effort to fully utilize the existing pool of truck drivers, NACA supports lifting the federal restrictions on drivers at least 18 years of age but under 21 operating commercial motor vehicles across state lines.

Crafting a comprehensive bill that will address our nation's enormous needs will require bipartisan leadership and coordination between all the various committees of jurisdiction in both chambers. As you continue the process, we urge to ensure that workforce policy is a central part of the conversation.

Thank you for your consideration. NACA and its members look forward to working with you and your colleagues to advance legislation to address both the nation's infrastructure and workforce needs.

Sincerely,

American Concrete Pavement Association  
American Concrete Pipe Association  
American Concrete Pressure Pipe Association  
American Concrete Pumping Association  
Concrete Foundations Association  
Concrete Reinforcing Steel Institute

National Concrete Masonry Association  
National Precast Concrete Association  
National Ready Mixed Concrete Association  
Precast/Prestressed Concrete Institute  
Portland Cement Association  
Tilt-Up Concrete Association