

Update on Federal Prevailing Wage Rates and Surveys

The last Federal Survey in Minnesota was six years ago, and it was for commercial work. The Federal Department of Labor Wage & Hour Division (WHD) website links to information on the status of Davis-Bacon surveys in each state and more.

<https://tinyurl.com/r9ntuur>

This site indicates no plans for any surveys in Minnesota through 2021. In addition the U.S. Department of Labor issued 'All Agency Memorandum 234' that indicates there are no federal surveys under consideration for Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota or Wisconsin through 2022.

The federal website also answers questions about wage conformances. A wage conformance is the term used by the federal government for an application to request a wage rate on a federally funded project when there is no wage rate posted for a type of work. We suggest calling the Federal Department of Labor WHD and not relying on email for conformances. Contact information can be found on their website using the link above.

Lastly, the federal website directs you to currently posted Davis-Bacon Wage Determinations.

If the current posted federal rates are union rates, it is important to check them to make certain they reflect the current CBA rates. If they do not, email updated CBA rates to the Federal DOL at WHD_CBA_UPDATES@dol.gov.

Mark the Date, Set the Rate Annual State Wage Survey Reminder

The deadline for submitting commercial, highway/heavy, and residential surveys to the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry is **June 4, 2021**. Projects reported must be active between April 5, 2020, and June 4, 2021. These surveys will result in the new prevailing wage rates being certified near the end of 2021 and those rates will then be in effect for the following 12 months. Both **prevailing wage projects and privately funded projects** should be reported. Each employee submitted can make a difference, especially in counties with less work to report.



For more information on Minnesota's State Prevailing Wage survey go to: <https://tinyurl.com/vt5t96tj>

If you have questions, call FCF at 651-797-2726.

A New Hope for Federal Infrastructure Spending

For the past few decades the prospect of a large federal infrastructure spending bill has been elusive. This is despite several decades of neglect and decay that is apparent throughout America on its roadways and waterways, bridges and levees, airports and water treatment facilities. Currently the American Society of Civil Engineers gives America an overall grade of "C-" on its infrastructure. While previous attempts at passing a large and comprehensive infrastructure bill have largely failed, a new attempt at achieving this critical goal is on the horizon.

In April, President Joe Biden announced his proposal for achieving a nationwide infrastructure overhaul. The \$2 trillion plan announced by the president has the ambitious goal of repairing 20,000 miles of roadway and 10,000 bridges, as well as eliminating lead pipes and renewing the energy grid to accommodate renewable energy sources. This latest infrastructure proposal goes beyond just improving America's physical infrastructure; it has an emphasis on improving human infrastructure as well. Included in the proposal is \$400 billion for in-home healthcare, \$16 billion to help fossil fuel workers transition to new work, and \$10 billion for a new Civilian Climate Corps. This latest infrastructure proposal has the potential to create hundreds of thousands of jobs in the building trades and construction industry.



Save the Date

The Minnesota State Building and Trades Council will be hosting their 75th annual Convention July 21 - 23, 2021, at Madden's On Gull Lake in Brainerd, MN. Once again this year, FCF will provide a boxed lunch and give a short presentation during the convention.



Fair Contracting Foundation

353 W. 7th Street, Suite 204
St. Paul, MN 55102
www.fcfn.org

Presorted
First Class
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #
St. Paul, MN

Credit: FCF-Vince Muzik

Essentia Health's "Vision Northland" project is under construction on Superior Street in downtown Duluth. The hospital is scheduled to open to patients by fall 2023.



Fair Contracting
Foundation

©May 2021

Workplace Safety Takes Priority in Minnesota

This last year has rightly brought additional focus on workplace safety as virtually every workplace has been faced with new safety challenges. The construction industry has had to continue to address the reality that construction is inherently dangerous work even without COVID. This was recently highlighted by a report in the Guardian that at least 6,500 migrant workers have died in Qatar since the country was awarded the FIFA 2022 World Cup (the report estimates that the actual number is much higher). The report does not provide an estimate of how many of these workplace deaths are tied to construction. But the report does note that it is likely that many of these workers were employed in the country's unprecedented building program during this time period.

By contrast, this spring also marks the two-year anniversary of the completion of St. Paul's Allianz Field, constructed efficiently and safely. Of course there is an immense difference in the scale of these projects. More importantly however, there is also almost certainly a difference in the working conditions. Allianz Field was constructed using a project labor agreement, ensuring a highly trained, skilled, and efficient workforce along with a project that was delivered on time and on budget.



Credit: FCF-Vince Muzik

Decline of Unions Costs Workers More Than \$3,000/Year

A recent study by the Economic Policy Institute found that the decline of unions during the last 40 years has led to a reduction of worker income by approximately \$3,250 per year, a 7.9% decrease since 1979. As worker power has declined, inequality and economic insecurity have skyrocketed, leaving millions of workers living paycheck-to-paycheck and lacking the resources to withstand economic emergencies. The Protecting the Right to Organize Act (PRO Act), which passed the U.S. House of Representatives in March, would go a long way toward shifting power back to working families. Notable aspects of the PRO Act include making it easier for workers to conduct votes on whether to join a union, outlawing state-level right-to-work laws, and banning mandatory individual arbitration.



Bipartisan Defeat of RTW in Montana

On March 2, 2021, a bipartisan group of legislators in Montana voted against implementing right-to-work by a nearly 2-to-1 margin (62-38). All 33 Democrats and 29 Republicans in the Montana House of Representatives voted against the bill. Such a resounding bipartisan defeat of this anti-labor bill demonstrates the effectiveness of labor advocacy during the last decade to educate politicians on both sides of the aisle about these critical issues. Since the Great Recession, votes on issues such as right-to-work and prevailing wage have typically fallen along strict party lines, but hopefully that is starting to change. The vote in Montana—coupled with the bipartisan defeat of right-to-work in Missouri in 2018, when voters strongly rejected a referendum on the issue—signals a possible new era of bipartisan support for workers' rights in the United States.

Giving is Natural for the Trades



Credit: FCF-Vince Muzik

When Saint Paul Building Trades Construction Council Executive Secretary Don Mullin was standing out on the street motioning cars to come into the IBEW 110 food give away, a woman pulled up to ask him, "Are you really giving away free food?" When Mullin answered in the affirmative, she thanked him and told him her prayers

had just been answered on her drive home. "I didn't know how I was going to feed my family tonight."

This past winter members of the Minnesota Building Trades put their feet and backs into helping distribute food to struggling people in their communities as part of Round 5 of the Farmers to Families Food Box program, a nationwide Coronavirus Food Assistance Program through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

"The need is great all over," said Saint Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center's Erica Dalager-Reed. "You have one in six people in Minnesota living with food insecurities. The need was there before COVID. The need is even greater now."

The St. Paul Regional Labor Federation under the Labor Studies and Resource Center became a broker of food for the state of Minnesota. Through this arrangement with the USDA, the unions received food deliveries and they proved particularly qualified to distribute it. While

food shelves consist mostly of non-perishable pantry items, these food stuffs contain perishable foods such as fresh fruits, vegetables and meat and dairy products. Food trucks arrived on site carrying 40,000 lbs. of food separated into 23 pallets with 70 boxes on each pallet. The trade unions provided the equipment to move the food, the manpower required for the heavy lifting, and the space to house the food for pick up. Precautions had to be taken for COVID, so contactless pick ups were done.

Both current and retired union members from across the building trades participated in 22 events just in March alone. The program expires early this spring; there's hope Congress will extend it again.

Barry Davies, financial secretary/treasurer of Iron Workers Local 512, said, "Helping out was a natural for us. We feel very fortunate because we have worked all year. It's a chance for us to give back to the community."

Scan here to watch a short video from the event.



SCAN ME



Credit: FCF-Vince Muzik

Our Mission

The Fair Contracting Foundation promotes prevailing wage law education, compliance and enforcement. It advocates for practices, policies and laws that ensure fair government contracts, a strong local industry and protection of the public interest. We're here to help. Give us a call at 651-797-2726 or toll-free at 1-844-777-0606.