

Zelco Excels as Female Mentor

Cement Mason, hockey coach, fitness competitor, single mom – Kate Zelco fills each of these roles - and sometimes all in the same day. When you consider she often commutes from her home in Sauk Rapids to jobs nearly 75 miles away in the Metro area, one wonders how she does it all in a 24-hour day.

After earning a kinesiology degree from Augsburg University, Zelco decided she wanted to work outside and do something physical. She actually started in the trade by answering an ad on Craig's List for a non-union company. "I had a son and needed to make money," she said. While working non-union on a Ryan Companies job, she was approached about joining the union. She thought the pay and benefits were hard to beat.

Being a woman in a male dominated industry didn't intimidate her. Rather it challenged her. "I challenged myself to hang with the boys," she explained. "In the union the men have treated me absolutely great. They are just like my brothers. When I worked non-union, it wasn't so hot."

Brian Farmer, apprenticeship coordinator at Cement Masons Local 633, recognized her commitment to the trade and hired her as a teacher at the Cement Masons training center. He appreciates someone who can be a guide to the ever-increasing role of women in the industry. "It's been exciting working with apprentices, particularly in the role of a female mentor," added Zelco. "For single moms like me or just women going it alone, through me I hope they realize it's not just a man's job. They can do it too."

Scan the QR Code to see a short video about Kate.



Credit: FCF-Vince Muzik



SCAN ME

Save the Date

The Minnesota State Building and Construction Trades Council will be hosting their 76th annual convention July 20 - 22, 2022, at the Mayo Event Center in Mankato, MN. Once again, FCF will provide a boxed lunch and give a short presentation during the convention.



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



As the Minnesota prevailing wage survey deadline approaches here are some important reminders:

1. **June 3, 2022**, is the deadline for wage survey submissions.
2. Work reported must be between **April 4, 2021, and June 3, 2022**.
3. Highway/Heavy projects must have a **total value** greater than \$25,000.
4. Commercial projects must have a **total value** greater than \$2,500.
5. All private and public work should be reported.

It is important that contractors understand that the \$25,000 cutoff for Highway/Heavy project size and \$2,500 for Commercial projects is for the **entire project** and not the amount for one contractor.

For more prevailing wage information go to:
<https://tinyurl.com/vt5t96tj>

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

New Agent/Organizer Training

On April 29, FCF hosted a compliance training seminar for new Building Trades business agents and organizers. This is the first training of this kind that FCF has been able to do since Covid-19 upended the world. Nearly 30 people were in attendance. Topics included prevailing wage, wage theft, licensing, and other important laws. We are grateful for this opportunity to share our knowledge and experience with future union leaders of the Minnesota construction industry. We know that there is always more work to be done to increase compliance and enforcement, so if you are interested in attending future trainings, please contact FCF at 651-797-2726.

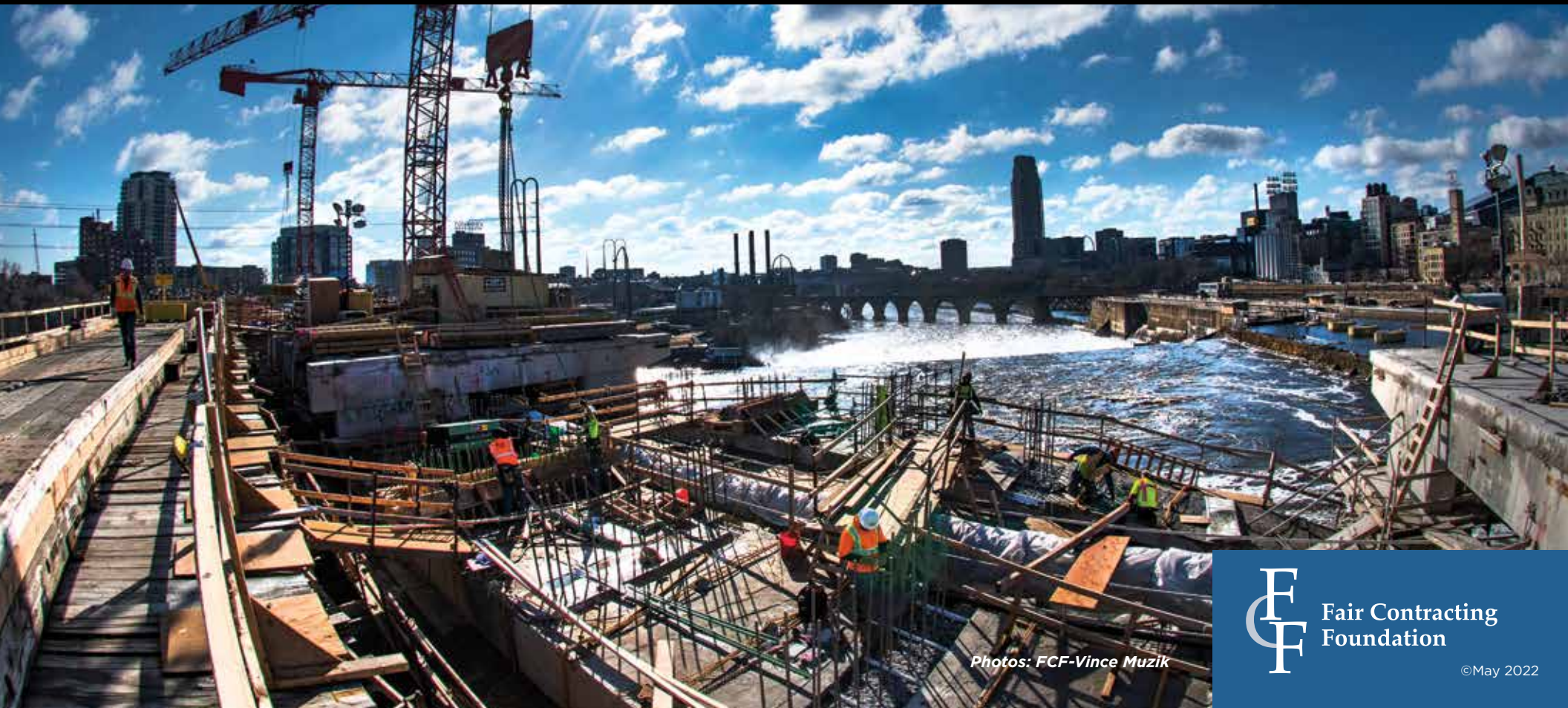


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A group of union carpenters, iron workers, laborers and operators continue to fix the 102-year-old Hwy 65/Third Avenue Bridge over the Mississippi River in downtown Minneapolis. It is scheduled to be completed by November 2022.



Photos: FCF-Vince Muzik

USDOL Proposes Most Significant Davis-Bacon Changes in 40 Years

On March 18, the US Dept. of Labor introduced proposed changes to the federal Davis-Bacon Act, which sets prevailing wage rates on more than \$200 billion annually of federal investments in public infrastructure. This initiated a 60-day period for construction industry stakeholders to submit comments to USDOL, which the agency must consider before it introduces a finalized rule. Some of the most important proposed changes include:

- Reinstating the “three-step” process, which was scrapped in 1983. This will allow USDOL to set prevailing wages rate even when no single rate reaches a majority threshold (50%) of survey responses, as long as a rate represents 30% of survey responses. If no single rate reaches 30%, then a weighted average will be used.
- Increasing USDOL’s authority to use state or local wage determinations under certain conditions for setting prevailing wage rates.

- Establishing a process for updating rates between surveys. Currently, many Davis-Bacon rates are outdated due to lack of regular surveys, and this will help keep prevailing wage rates more in line with market conditions across the country.
- Incorporating anti-retaliation provisions to Davis-Bacon contracts to protect workers who speak up about compliance concerns or assist enforcement agencies with job site investigations.



Comments will be accepted until **May 17**, and can be submitted online at [Regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov).

Meanwhile, FCF will draw on its extensive experience with the survey process and enforcement to submit a public comment on behalf of Minnesota’s unionized construction industry.

Congratulations to Craig Olson on his Retirement and Leadership Transition



L-R: Craig Olson and Andy Campeau.

Craig Olson recently retired as the President of the Duluth Building and Construction Trades Council. During his tenure Olson was a passionate and dedicated advocate for the men and women of the Building Trades in Northeastern Minnesota. He protected our standards, and through his numerous relationships in the area, was able to protect local economies and project owners with both project labor agreements and wage requirements. Olson was always willing to put in the work, whether through testifying before a government body, or taking a solo shift manning a banner. FCF congratulates Olson on his well-earned retirement. He will be missed.

FCF would also like to extend all of our support and appreciation to the new Duluth Council President Andy Campeau.



Credit: FCF-Vince Muzik

Next Generation in Safety: Construction Helmets



If you saw a trades worker on a job site wearing one of these, you’d be tempted to think that person left their hard hat at home and accidentally grabbed a hockey helmet or a mountain climbing helmet. But, in fact, the traditional hard hat may be left behind in the construction dust making way for the next generation of protective headgear: the construction helmet.

“I’ve used it for hockey. I’ve used it for rock climbing. I’ve used it on job sites. So, I’ve used it for just about everything!” admitted Bailey

Laboda, a second-year cement mason apprentice. “It’s more practical and safer. You aren’t worried about your hat falling off because it’s more secure.”

The traditional construction hard hat has remained the same for approximately 50 years. Its main purpose is to protect the head from something falling on it. It’s not very good for other accidents on job sites caused by slipping or falling because that’s when the traditional hard hat often falls off. The new style helmet is more secure; it forms to the head better because it has an advanced suspension system

inside and has a chin strap. Accessories can be added such as a visor on the front to eliminate the need for safety glasses, making it look like something you’d see an NHL hockey player wearing during a game.

“We are testing them out right now,” said John Gaddini, Regional Safety Director for Ryan Companies. “The trend is moving toward the European-style hard hat. In places like Seattle and in California you see them all over job sites. All the major players are going to them.”

The new helmet requires more care, which may be the only drawback. It may also explain the price tag. A Kask helmet runs \$120, and with attachments can cost \$200. Minnesota-based 3M has developed their own version, which starts at \$85.

Ultimately, the benefit may outweigh the cost to both workers and contractors. Adds Gaddini, “If you suffer a traumatic brain injury, your career is done. And it costs a company in liability.” This higher level of safety may prove to be a better investment.



Credit: FCF-Vince Muzik

Second Contractor Charged in Bid Rigging Scheme

Last year, concrete contractor Clarence Olson pleaded guilty to criminal charges for his role in a bid-rigging scheme in Minnesota. In March 2022, a second contractor was charged in connection with this scheme. Kamida Inc., and its CEO Steven Dornsbach, were indicted by a federal grand jury. The bid rigging scheme is alleged to have operated from at least as early as September 2012 through at least July 2017 and to have targeted at least four local governments and school districts in the Twin Cities area: Eden Prairie, Eden Prairie Schools, Plymouth, and Wayzata Schools.

Specifically, the charges in this case relate to alleged violations of the Sherman Act, a federal statute prohibiting anticompetitive agreements

and monopolistic behavior. Violations of the Sherman Act carry a maximum penalty of up to ten years in prison and a \$1 million fine for individuals, and a \$100 million fine for corporations. The indictment alleges that Dornsbach worked with other co-conspirators who submitted deliberately losing bids for concrete repair and construction contracts with municipalities; bids that used prices provided by Dornsbach. The fact that these sizeable government entities were allegedly victims of a bid-rigging conspiracy highlights the importance of establishing strong standards and oversight in Minnesota’s public construction industry.

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.