

Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters



Affiliated with
United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America

25120 Pacific Hwy. S., Suite 200 • Kent, Washington 98032
(253) 945-8800 • 1 (800) 573-8333 • Fax (253) 839-4908



January 31, 2018

Dear Chairman Kito,

I write you today to urge the House Labor and Commerce Committee to explore funding options for the Alaska Department of Labor, specifically funding for Alaska Occupational Safety and Health and Wage and Hour Investigators.

To provide the context for my request, I would like to give you background on the organization I work for, The Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters (PNWRCC) and my interactions with the Alaska Occupational Safety and Health and Wage and Hour inspectors.

Part of my role at the PNWRCC is visiting public and private construction jobsites. One aspect of these job visits is to ensure that the men and women are working in safe conditions and receiving pay for their work. On public works projects, another aspect is to ensure workers are receiving the correct prevailing wage and are not being misclassified as "independent contractors."

When I encounter an issue such as a wage discrepancy or a compromised safety condition on a public works project, I take that information to the Alaska Department of Labor so the appropriate agency can investigate and make a determination. Over the past 15 months, I have brought these matters to the Department of Labor. Despite their best attempts, investigators frequently tell me "we do not have the funding to investigate these claims."

The Wage and Hour Division is a safeguard for state monies spent on construction projects. When investigators do not have the funding necessary to enforce our laws, contractors abuse our state and the men and women working on these publicly funded projects.

One of the most common abuses I witness is worker misclassification. For example, a skilled carpenter builds a new school in Ketchikan. His employer however classifies and pays him as a laborer, a much lower rate of pay. For one individual, this might not seem like a big savings, but for contractors with large payrolls and year-long projects, the savings adds up quickly.

When these contractors are able to continue to create a market where laws go unenforced, the State of Alaska loses tax revenue and workers are cheated out of rightful pay. Honest contractors are left with few options; start cheating or close their doors. Neither is a good option, both options hurt the State, most of all it hurts the working people who depend on good jobs to keep the Alaskan economy churning.

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I ask that you as the Chair of the House Labor and Commerce Committee, explore funding options for the Alaska Department of Labor, specifically funding for Alaska Occupational Safety and Health and Wage and Hour Investigators. Speaking with the Alaska Department of Labor will help you gain a better understanding that funding for the enforcement of our Occupational Safety and Health and Wage and Hour laws are vital to the State as well as the working men and women of Alaska.

Sincerely,

Chris Dimond
Representative & Organizer
Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters
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Enclosure: Misclassification Literature