



International Union of Operating Engineers

LOCAL 302 • Washington • Alaska • Idaho • AFL-CIO

Daren Konopaski, *Business Manager & General Vice President*

February 16, 2026

Senate Labor & Commerce
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska

RE: Support for Senate Bill 217

Dear Senators,

On behalf of Operating Engineers Local 302, I write to express our strong support for Senate Bill 217. SB 217 increases training funds that will go directly to training providers across Alaska and provide individual training support and other supportive services to Alaskans seeking to enter or advance in the workforce.

Currently, there are not enough State Training and Employment Program (STEP) funds to support all qualified provider applicants. At the same time, inflation and rising operational costs mean existing STEP funds do not stretch as far as they once did. Without additional funding, training providers are forced to limit class sizes, delay programming, or turn away eligible participants.

This legislation ensures Alaska is positioned to meet future workforce demands, including the potential gas pipeline and other major infrastructure and resource development projects across the state. SB 217 provides a responsible funding structure that supports both small and large businesses while maintaining a balanced and predictable contribution system. By strengthening workforce development today, we reduce long-term economic strain and help stabilize Alaska's labor market.

Operating Engineers Local 302 represents skilled heavy equipment operators, heavy duty mechanics, service oilers and construction professionals statewide. We know firsthand that investing in training is investing in Alaska's future. A well-trained, homegrown workforce keeps jobs in-state, supports families, and strengthens local economies.

We cannot recruit our way out of Alaska's workforce shortage we must train our way out.

Sincerely,

Corey Baxter
District Representative
Operating Engineers Local 302
907-321-4271

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