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## NECA Boston Chapter In Support of Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) for the Commonwealth

**Employment, wages, training, on-time project delivery, taxpayer savings are among the many benefits**

*by Glenn Kingsbury, Executive Manager, NECA Boston Chapter*

WEST NEWTON, April 23, 2012 – While Massachusetts' economy emerges from the Great Recession in better shape than many other states, thousands of people – particularly construction workers – are still unemployed. Thankfully, Gov. Deval Patrick recognizes what some industry insiders, such as the Associated Builders and Contractors of Massachusetts, do not: Project Labor Agreements (PLA) increase employment pathways and save taxpayers money.

An accord between the owner and the contractors, PLAs identify acceptable terms and conditions of employment on a specific construction project. Wages, benefits, schedules, safety expectations and work rules are standardized up front to facilitate the smooth completion of the job on time and on budget. PLAs also foster a positive community impact by encouraging career development, training and outreach programs. They are common around the country, and President Barack Obama endorsed their application on federal projects over \$25 million in value. There are well over 20 studies by academia showing PLAs deliver responsible, cost-effective economic development.

Gov. Patrick recently approved a PLA for the \$260 million second phase of the Longfellow Bridge reconstruction between Boston and Cambridge. The heavily-used artery over the Charles River carries vehicles, pedestrians and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's Red Line subway. Gov. Patrick understands a PLA lays the groundwork for finishing this complex, four-year job as efficiently as possible at a time when commerce relies on stable infrastructure more than ever.

Shining PLA examples are abundant in the Commonwealth. The \$80 million Taunton Courthouse was built ahead of schedule and \$6 million under budget. UMass Boston's Integrated Science Building is currently ahead of schedule and has surpassed hiring goals for women, minorities and Boston residents. Last summer, contractors rapidly rebuilt 14 bridges on Interstate 93 over just 10 weekends – all early, \$30 million cheaper than the non-union bid and with minimal traffic disruptions. Several other Massachusetts entities have utilized PLAs, including the Boston Housing Authority, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard University, Fidelity, the New England Patriots, Northeastern University, the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority and Logan International Airport.

Through PLAs, contractors – union or not – receive instant access to uninterrupted, on-demand supplies of trained craftspeople. Similar to a professional office leveraging a staffing agency for administrative support, contractors simply contact centrally-located hiring halls for each trade and competent employees will report for duty as requested. Certified apprenticeships and labor dispatching services are time-tested PLA hallmarks prevalent in the unionized building trades and lend well to complicated projects that require varying amounts of specialized manpower.

Sadly, PLA opponents cannot overcome their anti-union sentiments to see that PLAs prescribe what our recovering economy needs most – local jobs, fair wages, training opportunities and responsible spending of taxpayer funds. The 100-plus Massachusetts-based employer-members of the National Electrical Contractors Association proudly join Gov. Patrick in supporting PLAs for the Commonwealth.

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