

DOD Suspends Project Labor Agreements: What It Means for Workers and Taxpayers

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The Department of Defense has announced the suspension of Project Labor Agreements on large-scale federal construction projects. This threatens to undermine workplace safety, fair wages, and the timely completion of critical infrastructure projects. It is hard to see the rationale for this decision, except as a handout to corporate interests. The

construction professionals who build and maintain America's defense infrastructure deserve better.



Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) serve as a reliable tool to ensure the successful completion of major construction projects undertaken by the federal government. PLAs help get the job done on time and within budget. Moreover, working under a PLA guarantee that the requisite safety and labor standards would be met—at both the beginning and end of the major construction projects—and that condition would prevail throughout the duration of those projects.

Furthermore, it was asserted that the clear terms set out in a PLA (which covers wages and working conditions, among other things) would, in fact, serve the federal government as a necessary tool in the service of ensuring that “both union and nonunion contractors can competently compete for federal work under the same labor conditions.”

National security could be compromised by suspending PLAs. The U.S. Government Accountability Office has confirmed that PLAs help to ensure a highly trained and vetted workforce for the sensitive infrastructure projects that protect our national security. Removing these agreements could lead to a less stable workforce and open the door for all manner of questionable contractors to take on projects vital to our national security.

Decades of accomplishment on historic federal projects like the Hoover Dam and major military bases have proven PLAs a reliable tool for managing complex construction tasks. And removing them from the construction toolbox won't simplify things. It will, in fact, slow down projects,

make them less efficient, put workers at more safety risk, and cost the taxpayers more money in the long run.

A genuine commitment to responsible spending and high-quality infrastructure demands that the federal government reverse this decision and restore PLAs for large-scale construction projects. Ensuring that workers are protected and that strong labor standards are in place is about much more than simply being fair. It is basic to safeguarding the integrity and the security of the most vital infrastructure projects in the country.

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