

Texas

September 2015

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Journal

The 84th Texas Legislature:
What Was in It for
Our Industry?

The Blueprint:
A "How-To" Guide for
Local Outreach in Schools

Winning Session for
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ONE-ON-ONE

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Texas
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Defending the Rights of Merit Shop Contractors

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LETTER from the Chairman



JOHNSON

The 84th Legislative session has ended and ABC of Texas (ABC Texas) has begun preparation for the 85th Legislative Session beginning in 2017. As Chair of ABC State, I serve a two year term running from August of 2015 to August of 2017. Mark Roach and Mike Gremillion, both of whom have ably led the group for the past four years, have agreed to remain active and assist me. I will also be substantially supported and directed by ABC Texas' strong leadership group, President Jon Fisher, Chair-Elect Ben Westcott, the executive committee, the board of directors, and the Chapter Presidents.

ABC Texas leadership group's philosophy is that all construction industry business should be accomplished using a free enterprise and merit shop platform. During the next year, ABC Texas will focus on its responsibility to further this philosophy by educating voters on candidates which also support these values. Further, ABC Texas will support, through monetary contributions and individual effort, those candidates and other organizations which support these free enterprise beliefs.

2016 is a presidential election year so there will be a lot of "activity" within the political parties, both on the state and national level. A wide open presidential race for the GOP (with its seventeen and counting candidates), and even the Democratic front runner seems to be stumbling as of late, creating opportunities for other candidates of that party. It is crucial that ABC Texas' business viewpoints are championed by federal and state elected officials who are of like mind.

The ABC Texas leadership group will also be formulating legislative priorities for the next legislative session. This task is quite fluid and there is no shortage of topics requiring attention. Lien law reform, proper classification of employees, neutrality in State government contracting, and State breach of contract are only a few of the many concerns which may be selected by the leadership group as priorities for the 2017 legislative year.

Finally, in the next two years ABC Texas may see some changes. The first, by possibly adding a new Chapter to the seven existing Chapters which make up ABC Texas; the leadership group certainly welcomes this possibility. The second, ABC Texas may be required to find new leadership due to the possible retirement of its long time President, Jon Fisher. While Jon will say nothing in life is certain, he has indicated that time is marching on and he does have a family and a place in the Hill Country, both of which could use more of his attention. Jon has thoughtfully given the group an early heads up, so that the planning, search, and transition process can begin.

Wes Johnson
2015 - 2017 ABC of Texas Chairman
The Gardner Law Firm

LETTER from the President



FISHER

Dear ABC of Texas Member:

By the time you get this magazine, we will have elected officers for the next two year cycle. Wes Johnson is the 5th Chair I have the privilege to serve under. Each chair brings a fresh perspective to the job, and I look forward to working with Wes over the next two years.

I will take this opportunity to thank the four other chairs I have served under—Roger Berry (I will always remember his steady hand and wise counsel as I began my tenure as your President); Andy Koebel (Andy shared his ambition of being the best Chair ABC of Texas ever had and to be my favorite Chair—unfortunately, the current Chair is ALWAYS my favorite Chair!); Mike Gremillion (Mike is still an influential presence on the Board and supported me through some interesting times—you are never in doubt about what he wants—I like that); and, last but not least, Mark Roach (Mark actually let me know back in 2006 that this job may be opening—Mark is a very independent thinker and incredibly loyal to ABC—I will always remember he helped me get here).

I know that Wes hinted that I may be moving on after 10 years as your President (it would not be until 2018 at the earliest). My primary concern is not to leave this effort without a clear and convincing path forward. For that reason, I remain flexible and willing to do what is in the best interests of the association as the Board sees it. I do not want to leave this effort I have worked so hard to advance without the means to continue to advance.

By the time you get this magazine, ABC of Texas will have formulated its means for updating our Strategic Plan. We have done things a little differently each time, but the main thing I like to see us address is whether we are doing what we wanted to do over the last two years to advance us toward our longer term goals. I hope each of you will feel free to communicate with the State Board Members from your chapter if you have any ideas for our strategic direction. Just a reminder—this is strategic planning, not setting of legislative goals. That latter effort will start in April of next year unless the Board decides differently. Of course, your input is welcome in that process also.

I have a very simple philosophy of association management—find out what the members want you to do and do it! Without continuous input, how do I know if I am doing what the members want?

Later in this issue, I will be summarizing what I believe was accomplished (and not accomplished) in the 84th Texas Legislature. I believe it is important to keep the big picture in mind—the Texas economy. So long as the economy is strong, there will be opportunities for our industry. The importance to our industry of keeping a favorable business environment in Texas cannot be overstated!

As always, feel free to contact me or your elected leadership if you see challenges we need to address.

Jon Fisher
ABC of Texas
President

THANK YOU

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The 84th Texas Legislature

WHAT WAS IN IT FOR OUR INDUSTRY?

First and foremost, it is important to recognize that most if not all of us work for companies that are designed to make a profit. Without that profit, we have no jobs. Thus, while you may not believe that helping your company economically may directly benefit you—if you get a paycheck, it absolutely does! These efforts we embark on in governmental affairs are designed to keep you employed by keeping your company profitable. That is the bottom line.

Speaking of the bottom line, how can anyone be disappointed with an extra \$4.5 billion in construction spending and a 25% reduction in the business franchise tax? Both of those are really big for our industry. The 84th Texas Legislature appropriated about \$1.4 billion in construction spending and authorized another \$3.1 billion in tuition revenue bonds for higher education (see separate article by State Rep. Paul Workman). Plus, they significantly reduced the franchise tax—one of our high priorities!

We continue to struggle with our allies to try to improve State Breach of Contract, ensure that retainage is available if the job goes south, and make lenders notify us if funding to a construction project is cut off. And, the dynamics surrounding worker misclassification continue to evolve with unions and self-appointed advocates pulling one way and our natural allies pulling another. It is clear to most of us which group we work with going forward.

Of course, no one was more disappointed in the outcome of our Neutrality in State Government Contracting than

your State President. This simply should have passed. It is ironic that we have been able to pass this bill easily in the Texas House of Representatives two sessions in a row with overwhelming support only to see our efforts fall apart in the Texas Senate. In 2013, Senate rules presented an obstacle—we needed 21 votes and there were only 19 Republicans in the Senate. Of course, we tried to reach out to Democrats, but the reality of Democratic Primaries makes that difficult. But, that session, we were also thwarted by the referral of the bill to a committee with a Democratic Chair. This year was even more frustrating. Due to a change in Senate rules, we only needed 19 votes and there were 20 Republicans. But, for some reason, the Republican Chair of the committee to which the bill was referred decided to unilaterally kill the bill by not ever setting it for a hearing. And, either his staff was not told or they were told not to tell us. Shortly after the session, that Senate Chair announced he was not running for re-election. We still need to thank State Rep. Tan Parker and State Senator Kelly Hancock for their efforts. Rep. Parker was a joint author in 2013 and the primary author in 2015. He helped pass it two sessions in a row. Senator Hancock authored the Senate bill in 2013 and 2015 and continued pushing the house bill in the Senate until the very end.

And, to end on a high note, we went into the session hoping to hold our ground on workforce/education efforts. Were we ever surprised! Legislators proposed and passed several bills that allow for more CTE teachers to be approved, lift the cap on dual credit courses, add a course in middle school on career and college readiness, provide



a means to better train counselors to counsel on career and college readiness, and establish advisory committees with business and industry to work on aligning curricula for CTE education. ABC of Texas was active in supporting these efforts.

And, we also worked with our business and civil justice allies to make progress on tort reform issues.

And, ABC of Texas also worked with other construction groups to pass bills to ensure that Construction Manager-at-Risk could not be used interchangeably with Design-Build and that Public-Private Partnership opportunities do not evaporate because of bad practices.

Did we get everything we asked for? No. Is the construction industry better off than before the session? Overwhelmingly so! And, that's the point, isn't it? 🗗



Jon Fisher

Jon Fisher has been President of ABC of Texas since mid-2008. Prior to that he was senior vice president at Texas Chemical Council. He has led ABC of Texas in preparing plans for legislative sessions and participation in the Texas elections. Most recently, he helped ABC of Texas prepare a Strategic Plan for the next 4 years with emphasis on the next 2 years. To contact Jon, email jon@abctexas.org.

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THE BLUEPRINT: A “How-To” Guide for Local Outreach in Schools

BY MIKE MERONEY



The Associated Builders and Contractors of Texas recently partnered with several construction trade associations to produce and publish a “how to” guide for local outreach in schools across the state. The Blueprint is designed to provide strategies and tactics to help shine a light on the great jobs that few seem excited about anymore.

Through targeted outreach, individuals and companies in construction can remind audiences that real opportunity still exists for those who are willing to work hard, learn a skill in demand, and make a good living for themselves and their families. In short, we’re making our case for the skilled trades.

Right now, there are millions of jobs that American companies are struggling to fill, and most of these jobs don’t require an expensive four-year degree. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the number hovers around three million open positions. The problem – and opportunity – is greatest in the State of Texas, where the professionals and company representatives in the construction industries, are especially hurting for good help.

Texas has experienced incredible economic growth

over the last several years. Led by resurgence in energy, petrochemicals, manufacturing, and construction, the state’s economy has been widely acclaimed as a great place to do business with endless opportunity.

But leaders from across the business community have identified one of the most pressing issues that’s critical to our continued success: workforce development. We must develop a qualified employee base properly trained for tomorrow’s job needs or face an understaffed economy that will stifle the growth and vitality of our state. We must also ensure that young people in Texas have the skills and opportunities to enter the workforce and build successful careers, raise families and prosper.

The construction industry can reach out to kids in junior high and high school, their parents, and their counselors, teachers and administrators. The Blueprint will help provide ideas and direction for that specific, targeted outreach.

We can help spread the word about opportunities available within these industries and companies. Hopefully we can help reinvigorate the trades, and inspire more people to master a useful skill. We want to encourage more people to pursue job opportunities that actually exist – specifically, opportunities that require the mastery of a skill that’s in high demand.

The Blueprint is essentially a targeted outreach campaign for students, parents, teachers, counselors and administrators. It is commonly accepted that many potential workers, and the people who advise and guide them, are not aware of career opportunities in construction, and that they often hold misperceptions of what the work is like in these sectors.

Our goal is to raise awareness through outreach to target audiences to increase enrollment in training programs and increase number of applicants for those positions.

Recently passed laws in both the 83rd (2013) and 84th (2015) Texas Legislatures have – for the first time in decades – offered an opportunity for real changes to graduation plans and curriculum in high schools, junior highs and middle schools.

HB 5 of 2013 in particular allows for more applied and experiential learning, career and technical education (CTE), and dual credit courses to be taught in high school. That kind of relevance to both the workforce and higher education will yield: 1) a lower high school dropout rate, 2) more interest in school at all levels, 3) a significant closing of

the skills gap, and 4) ultimately, a lower unemployment rate.

And HB 18 of 2015 adds a 7th- or 8th-grade (semester-long) course on career and college readiness to explore graduation plans, endorsements, and college and career choices.

The Blueprint Is now available to all members of ABC of Texas. It is copyrighted by the author to protect those funding the project. ABC of Texas members can obtain a copy through their local chapters or by contacting your State President, Jon Fisher, at jon@abctexas.org. 🇺🇸



Mike Meroney

Mike Meroney serves as a trusted advisor to clients, helping them influence legislation, regulations and perceptions through: direct legislative and regulatory advocacy; grassroots activation and coordination; coalition building; message development and written communications tools; news media relations management; and research. His expertise and network of relationships help clients achieve their public policy goals and business objectives by shaping decision-making in Texas, Washington, D.C., and across the U.S.



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ONE ON ONE

TEXAS SENATOR

Brandon Creighton

Senator Creighton is an eighth-generation Montgomery County resident. He graduated from the University of Texas and holds his Doctor of Jurisprudence from Oklahoma City University School of Law. He is the Vice-President and General Counsel for a land development firm based in The Woodlands, Texas. The Senator's prior work history includes the Office of the Attorney General for the state of Texas and the state of Oklahoma, private law practice and twenty years experience in real estate brokerage and development. Creighton served in the Texas House for 8 years prior to the Senate. He has also served as a Director for the Montgomery County based Lonestar groundwater conservation district and of CASA Child Advocates; he has been a long-standing Montgomery County attorney; and is a lifetime member of the First Baptist Church of Conroe.

What is your view of the free enterprise system?

Free enterprise should be allowed to advance based upon competition in the marketplace with minimal governmental restriction or interference. Any necessary regulatory action taken by the government should be fair, broad based and reasonable.

How do you believe the Legislature did last session in addressing our state's needs?

We made significant advances in paying off debt, cutting taxes, and investing in education and infrastructure. With a balanced budget, \$10 billion in our Rainy Day Savings account, and \$4 billion in reserve funds, Texas is on as strong of a foundation for success as any state in the nation.



The construction industry benefited from passage of \$3.1 billion in tuition revenue bonds, an additional \$1.4 billion in the budget for construction projects, and a bill I sponsored providing additional legal protections for certain multi-family construction projects.

You carried a bill for the construction industry this session (SB 1081). It dealt with notice to contractors of the coverage in consolidated insurance plans (CIPs). That was one of the few construction industry-supported bills that passed. How do you think the construction industry fared in the last Texas Legislature?

The best news is that no bill passed that could hurt the construction industry. We pushed hard to diminish the impact of the franchise tax on larger businesses by repealing it for half of the businesses in the state and giving all other businesses a 25% overall reduction. The construction industry benefited from passage of \$3.1 billion in tuition revenue bonds, an additional \$1.4 billion in the budget for construction projects, and a bill I sponsored providing additional legal protections for certain multi-family construction projects. And, assuming the passage of Proposition 7, significant funds will be directed toward large transportation projects.

The national economy has been faltering, what is your view of our state's economy?

Texas continues to over perform compared to the national trends but we have challenges ahead with crude oil prices remaining low and a federal government that refuses to get its fiscal house in order. As a state, we are more prepared and more diverse than we were in the 1980's, and we will continue to show the country how resilient we are. With a favorable tax climate, tort reform and a sensible regulatory climate, Texas should weather the storm.

You have been a strong advocate for the 10th Amendment. Some conservatives have been challenged about alleged duplicity in supporting States Rights but not always supporting "local control". Can you briefly explain the difference.

When we speak of the 10th Amendment, we're not just talking about a legal theory. We're talking about a constitutional right. States' rights transcend the concept of local control. This is a fundamental premise designed by our forefathers to ensure the strength and survival of the Republic as it was created. Healthy competition among the states provides for a strong national framework, and all of this is premised upon the federal government handling very few issues leaving all else to the states to decide. Of course cities and counties should be free from unfunded mandates from the state and I will always advocate for that. However, this is mutually exclusive from a constitutional argument and should be on the minds of every concerned citizen.

What were your personal priorities last session and how did they fare?

Cut the franchise tax, limit government growth and spending in a balanced state budget, reduce debt, advance transportation funding alternatives, create a three-judge panel for all future school finance litigation, protect the right to hunt and fish, improve education, promote and protect our state sovereignty first by securing our border, enable the deepening of the Sabine Neches waterway so the Panama Canal expansion ships can park and unload there, expand our 2nd Amendment rights, and promote Pro-life Pro-Family and Pro-Liberty policies that give Texans a strong foundation to create jobs and opportunity for others.

I am pleased to say these were some of the victories of the 84th Texas Legislative session. 🇹🇽



STATE OF TEXAS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Texas' booming population, growing by more than 1,000 people per day, is a welcome result of our state's sound economic policies, including low taxes, reasonable regulations and restrained government spending. However, it also presents serious challenges, as we must maintain the workforce to build new homes, businesses and infrastructure.

Texas needs men and women dedicating their talents to the construction industry, and as a state, we must encourage students and Texans of all ages to consider construction as a worthy career option.

Each year, October is dedicated to increasing public awareness and appreciation of the construction industry. During this month, employers, trade associations and schools are encouraged to conduct job fairs, panel discussions and community events to inform students of the industry's many employment opportunities.

At this time, I encourage all Texans to learn more about our construction industry and recognize the critical role it plays in the development of Texas and the nation.

Therefore, I, Greg Abbott, Governor of Texas, do hereby proclaim October 2015 to be

Careers in Construction Month



in Texas, and urge the appropriate recognition whereof.

In official recognition whereof, I hereby affix my signature this the 27th day of July, 2015.

Greg Abbott
Governor of Texas

GOVERNOR ABBOTT

PROCLAIMS OCTOBER

**"CAREERS IN CONSTRUCTION
MONTH"**

On July 27, at the request of ABC of Texas, Texas Governor Greg Abbott declared October "Careers in Construction Month".

Thanks to Jack Baxley of TEXO and the North Texas Construction Education Foundation for forwarding the request from NCCER.

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Winning Session for Higher Education

With the recent legislative session having concluded in June and with most new laws taking effect September 1, this is a good opportunity to take stock of what the Texas Legislature managed to accomplish in 140 days.

For the first time in nearly a decade, the Legislature approved \$3.1 billion worth of tuition revenue bonds, which will provide funding for numerous capital improvement projects at public universities throughout Texas. In the past, these construction bonds have been approved every other session, but that has not been the case in recent years.

The bonds, which are attached to specific projects, will help pay for the construction of dozens of new buildings on our college campuses, including facilities for science, technology, engineering, and medical science. Many of these projects have already been designed and are ready for construction.

It is an exciting time in Texas for our expanding colleges and for our robust economy, which is leading the nation in job creation. The many capital improvement projects on the way will allow our universities to reach their full potential while spurring jobs growth.

Though this session saw some victories for the construction industry, many legislative priorities did not make it across the finish line, such as lender notification and retainage trust fund policies. Should the good people of District send me back to the Capitol, I will continue to work hard for the construction industry in Texas. 🇹🇽



Paul D. Workman

State Representative Paul D. Workman (R-District 47) represents southern and western Travis County in the Texas House of Representatives. Paul is a decades-long construction professional, owning his own company for most of that time.



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19 teams competed for diamond supremacy in the 9th Annual TEXO Softball tournament, sponsored by Burlison Electric, held June 6th at the Hurst Athletic Complex.

TEXO Chapter

The race for the Cup is on...the TEXO Challenge Cup that is!

Mother Nature's wrath couldn't stop over 120 teams from participating in the 2015 ASA/TEXO Bass Classic; the first of six events in the TEXO Challenge Cup competition presented by Acton Mobile. The tournament, sponsored by Humphrey & Associates and Neal & Associates, was held on Lake Fork in Alba, TX, one of the top bass fishing lakes in the country.

Batter Up!

19 teams competed for diamond supremacy in the 9th Annual TEXO Softball tournament, sponsored by Burlison Electric, held June 6th at the Hurst Athletic Complex. Last year's champions, Adolfsen & Peterson was looking for a repeat but BakerTriangle would stand in their way. Hammering past the competition, Baker stayed strong throughout the tournament and had to battle AUI Contractors twice before becoming the 2015 TEXO Softball tournament champions!

FOUR!

Jordan Spieth was not in attendance but the TEXO Open Golf Tournament had its share of stars during the 2015 tournament. In the early round, BakerTriangle and Adolfsen & Peterson would take home important 3rd place points after shooting a 62. Northstar Builders would squeak out

2nd place on tiebreaker as they also shot a 62. Two time runner up in the TEXO Challenge Cup, TDIndustries, would pick up significant ground on Humphrey & Associates as they took home 1st place in the morning round with a 61 and 3rd place in the afternoon with a score of 62. Thank you tournament sponsor Walker Engineering!

What's Next?

The final 3 Challenge Cup events are on the schedule and preparations made. September 3rd the Dallas Gun Club will host the Annual Clay Bird Shoot-Out benefitting the Education & Research Foundation. Silver Lake Marina on Lake Grapevine will be the location for the TEXO Mega Event which will feature the final two Challenge Cup Events on Saturday, October 24th. The 2015 TEXO Washer Tournament hosted by TEXO's Young Constructor's Council and the 2015 TEXO Chili Cook-Off. This mega event is open to the public, registration is required.

For more information on these and other TEXO events, visit the website at www.texoassociation.org.

Central Texas Chapter

The ABC Central Texas Chapter continues to build momentum heading into the third quarter of 2015. Marketing and Education Coordinator Amy Grace Torres joined the chapter early in June and has been an integral part of improving chapter communications, preparing for

events such as the August clay shoot and the upcoming Excellence in Construction Awards on October 1st. Amy has also helped facilitate growth for the chapter's OSHA partnership, and is an overall asset when it comes to bringing members closer and making them more informed on ABC issues.

The Board of Directors also welcomed two new additions in Flintco's Ryan Baker and Jeff Eubank of SpawGlass, and will be gearing up for their annual planning session in the coming months. The chapter continues to focus on member value via safety and leadership training beginning this month and next, and is proud to step into a new year of helping more than a hundred institutions around the state facilitate NCCER craft training to the next generation of industry leaders.

In addition to the aforementioned events, ABC Central Texas is gearing up for its 2nd annual OSHA Safety Rodeo on November 5th. Last year the chapter trained more than 120 ABC member company employees in areas of fall protection, electrical safety and ladder safety and will be expanding the focus this year to include a speaker series and vendor networking opportunities.

Chapter leadership have been excited and engaged throughout Chapter President Josh Tompkins' first full year at the helm, and are excited about continuing to build into 2016 and beyond.

Texas Mid Coast Chapter

The ABC Texas Mid Coast Chapter works hard to expand workforce development initiatives. Members serve on a Construction Technology & Architectural Design Advisory Committee assisting the local high schools and team up with community outreach programs to inspire the future construction workforce. The Chapter offers NCCER Construction Site Safety Technician certifications and a variety of Safety Training and Education classes. A membership dinner was held on August 13 to shine a spotlight on what the Chapter is doing to aid in workforce development.

In June, the Mid Coast Chapter, with the support of Turner Industries, was proud to present donations totaling \$4,500 to: Golden Crescent CASA, Ronald McDonald House Charities and The Harbor.

In July, the Chapter received the Victoria Chamber of Commerce Small Business Partner of the Month award and was recognized for services rendered, cooperation and support.

There is so much to be thankful for in this region of Texas and the chapter is very proud to support Bee, Calhoun, DeWitt, Goliad, Jackson, Lavaca, Refugio and Victoria Counties.

Coastal Bend Chapter

It's been another exciting quarter at the Texas Coastal Bend Chapter! As always, the monthly First Wednesday Mixers

were a hit, and a special "Thank You" is extended to this summer's sponsors: April – H & E Equipment Services, Inc.; May – Omni Industrial Tire; June – Fishbone Safety Solutions; July – Thomas Products, Inc. and August – Airgas Onsite Safety.

The Chapter's 27th Annual Golf Classic was held at the River Hills Country Club in early May. Heading up the Golf Committee once again this year was Mike Blundell with Repcon, Inc., who delivered another successful event. The chapter's extreme gratitude to this year's wonderful committee members, sponsors, participants and volunteers. They are vital to the success of events. This year's 1st Place Team was Turner Industries Group, LLC. Funds from the tournament went to benefit scholarships for students attending the Craft Training Center of the Coastal Bend (CTCCB).

In June, the Contractors Safety Council of the Coastal Bend (CSCCB) hosted their annual South Texas Industrial Industry Safety Excellence Awards banquet. Every year ABC-TCB, CSCCB and Port Industries of Corpus Christi recognize the industrial contractors in the area who have maintained an excellent safety program. A special "Congratulations" goes to the 2015 ABC-TCB Safety Training Evaluation Process (STEP) Award winners: CCC Group (Platinum); Mirage Industrial Group, LLC (Platinum); Turner Industries Group, LLC (Platinum); Brock Services, LLC (Diamond); Repcon, Inc. (Diamond); Rabalais I&E Constructors (Gold). Later in the month at the June General Membership Luncheon, ABC Member and State Representative Todd Hunter was the Guest Speaker and give an update to members about the 2015 Texas Legislative Session.



The Contractors Safety Council of the Coastal Bend (CSCCB) hosted their annual South Texas Industrial Industry Safety Excellence Awards banquet.



Over 40 graduates earned certificates in the Craft Training Program at the 39th Annual ABC/MSTI Graduation held by the Texas Gulf Coast Chapter.

In July, the 21st Annual Fishing Tournament was held at Marker 37 Marina. Co-Chairs, Mike Garza and Cliff Johnstone, both with Swantner and Gordon Insurance Agency along with a very dedicated committee organized a fun and successful event with a record 38 teams. There were record prize and cash payouts of nearly \$20,000. Thank you to all of the volunteers, sponsors and anglers for their support. The chapter is certainly looking forward to an even bigger event next year.

To wrap up a busy summer schedule, the chapter is currently working on the 14th Annual Skeet & Trap shoot and an IBCA sanctioned BBQ Cook Off to be held on September 11th and 12th at the Corpus Christi Rifle and Pistol Club.

Texas Gulf Coast Chapter

At last writing, the chapter had successfully opened the doors to a new facility in early April! Visitors and trainees for Brazosport Safety Council, Merit Shop Training, Inc., and the Texas Gulf Coast Chapter found their way around the building with the help of excited and grateful employees. On June 2, the chapter celebrated a Grand Opening with 300+ well-wishers from the community, from across the state and even from ABC National. Plant and contractor leaders, Mayors, County Commissioners and Texas State Representatives and Congressmen also pulled into the parking lot at 1002 ABC Avenue in Freeport, TX for the big event. The chapter appreciates all those who were able to attend and invite others to visit soon. ABC thanks the Board Members for their vision, their dedication and their hard work to ensure that this new facility would serve the industry and community for many years.

Appropriately, the first big event, the 39th Annual ABC/MSTI Graduation, recognized one of the main reasons ABC exists – to promote workforce development and provide avenues for training of highly skilled craftsmen. This year, over 40 graduates earned certificates in the Craft Training Program. They, along with their families, were honored at the ceremony and dinner on July 7, 2015. Industry and contractors also wasted no time in scheduling meeting and event rooms for trainings and other events.

Members have also enjoyed opportunities for networking and meeting new members this summer. One popular event that is growing each year is the Supplier/Member Mixer and Crawfish Boil. Other members have benefited from the HR Question & Answer Sessions sponsored by the Human Resources Committee. As beautiful as the new building is and as uncooperative as the weather was in June, many were ready to get outside. The 12th Annual ABC Inshore Fishing Tournament was held for members and their guests June 12-14, yet another opportunity for the members.

ABC Texas President Jon Fisher will visit in September for a Legislative Update during the annual Joint Membership Meeting for ABC, BSC and MSTI as well as the 31st Annual Golf Tournament on September 11.

Greater Houston Chapter

ABC Greater Houston chapter is preparing for the 2015 Houston City Elections. The Political Action Committee has been spending its time meeting and evaluating candidates. The PAC has met with every mayoral candidate and is still in the process of making a final decision on an endorsement. The 2015 mayoral race is one of the most competitive and funded races in the city's history. In fact, the Houston mayoral election is the largest and most expensive in the country. ABC is planning a debate between the two mayoral runoff candidates on November 13th at the ABC membership breakfast. The venue and time are not final and updates will be posted on the chapter's website at www.abchouston.org.

The ABC PAC has made its first round of endorsements in the Houston City Council races. Houston City Council is comprised of 14 members with nine elected from council districts and five at-large. Currently, seven council members have received an ABC endorsement: Dwight Boykins, Jack Christie, Jerry Davis, Michael Kubosh, David Martin, David Robinson, and Brenda Stardig. All 7 of these candidates received the support of ABC in 2013 and ABC is excited to continue to work with these Council Members in 2015. Over the course of their terms, these candidates have proven to listen and value the respective industry solutions to some of the problems Houston faces today.



45 teams competed in the annual Fall Clay Shoot which helped raise money for the Political Action Committee of Greater Houston



South Texas Chapter at the ABC-National legislative conference in D.C.

The problems Houston faces over the next term limit highlights the importance of the 2015 election. The Houston pension program is underfunded, the budget passed by council in July added 700 plus positions within the city despite a deficit, and there is continued private industry frustration on the technological shortcomings of various Houston city departments. Candidates are building their platforms on fixing the pensions through diplomacy, cutting unnecessary city department spending, and integrating private sector technology to increase services and efficiency. These issues matter to ABC. The Houston permitting process is slow and implementing an electronic system would cut down on the long process for simple permits. Unfunded liability creates uncertainty in the Houston market and reasonable negotiations need to be made with the city's police and fire union to give the Houston's budget stability and bring work and projects into the city. ABC PAC is looking for a candidate to finally fix the city's budget instead of kicking the can down the road. Hopefully the PAC can help ensure Houston elects a candidate who is committed to solving Houston's problems.

South Texas Chapter

Events, education and advocacy – and that's not all that has been happening at the South Texas Chapter. There has also been a focus on membership growth. After hitting the 90% retention goal there have been two recruitment receptions that generated new members the evenings they were held (maybe the \$100 Bass Pro gift cards had something to do with the success), and there has been an increase in the number of companies approaching the chapter about joining. The chapter should hit growth by this Fall.

On the advocacy front, meetings with the local energy provider are starting to pay off. Just about every project has been experiencing difficulty in securing temporary service to projects and in many cases permanent service. Part of the problem is the dramatic increase in construction activity in the South Texas region, but it also turns out that "work rules" were playing their part. As one developer put it "...the difference between sticks and poles is poles are in the ground and I've got nothing but sticks on my project." Outsourcing will help alleviate this problem. Imagine, a single work crew that would dig the hole, put the pole in

the ground AND string the wire on the same day instead of three crews over a few weeks.

Over the summer there was also the successful annual ABC-National legislative conference in D.C. giving all Texas chapters the opportunity to help educate elected officials about regulatory burdens being placed on contractors. ABC also presented those who are strong supporters of Free Enterprise with an Eagle Award.

The chapter is preparing for the 2015/2016 apprenticeship school year in four trades, with classes starting in early September. The difficulty has been the inability of contractors to find qualified employees for their workforce. There is growing interest in a new Supervisory Leadership training program. The three part program is targeted at recent apprenticeship graduates and others showing leadership potential.

Chapter business development activities have been wildly successful. The chapter co-hosted the first annual "Summer Shindig" mixer in June with ASA, TACCA and the Tri-County Chamber of Commerce. In August the chapter conducted its annual Excellence In Construction Awards banquet at the San Antonio Country Club. Fourteen contractors won awards in 20 categories. S.T.E.P. and chapter safety awards were also presented to thirty-three contractors – the most ever! Upcoming events include the Fall Golf Tournament, October Fishing Tournament and then the November Sporting Clays shoot.

Pull up a chair & tell us your story.

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