

# DEPARTMENTAL NEWS

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## The Washington Connection

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### As Unemployment Rises, So Do Jurisdictional Disputes

The subject of policing and protecting the roofers and waterproofer's work jurisdiction may seem repetitive. However, considering the state of our economy and lack of work over the past few years, it's a topic that deserves to be revisited.

The survival and growth of the union sector of the construction industry are dependent upon our ability to secure and protect our work jurisdiction. Construction unemployment as of July 2010 remains at about 20 percent, which is more than double the nation's overall rate of 9.5 percent. In fact, construction unemployment remains the highest of all industries in the country. Although there has been relief in certain regions, roofing hours worked so far this year are still way below average. Stimulus packages have provided some man hours, but they are only a temporary solution. In times like these we constantly need to be vigilant and on top of work opportunities for our members and signatory contractors.

In economic downturns, every trade becomes desperate to keep their membership working. This unfortunately leads to traditional work jurisdiction boundaries being violated, which explains why we have seen an increase in the number of jurisdictional disputes. Although there is a process to resolve these disputes (the "Plan for the Settlement of Jurisdictional Disputes in the Construction Industry"), it is sometimes subjective in nature and only applies to certain projects, such as those covered by project labor agreements. Our contractors need to secure the work from the onset, rather than fight for it through the Plan for Jurisdictional Disputes.

Many of our locals do a tremendous job protecting our work jurisdiction in their areas. They attend pre-bid or pre-job meetings, participate in their Building and Trades Councils, aggressively police the geographic jurisdiction of their local and market the skills of their members to end-users. These are a few of many methods that can be used on a daily basis to secure our work jurisdiction. Understandably, there are many locals that do not have the resources to effectively address this function on a day-to-day basis. However, any consistent effort in this area is, in my opinion, better than none at all, especially in times like we are facing today.

In spite of the weak economy, there is one sector of the roofing industry that is on the upswing and continues to grow: green roofing. Last year alone, there was an increase of over 16 percent in vegetative roof applications, according to the industry group Green Roofs for Healthy Cities. Furthermore, the application of cool, or reflective, and solar photovoltaic roofs is rapidly becoming the norm in the industry rather than the exception.

The roofing industry is evolving as it responds to environmental and energy consumption issues. In order for us to sustain and grow in market share, we need to demonstrate that we can fulfill all industry trends, without delay. We must train our members in these systems. Most importantly, we need to educate end-users of our services that this is the work of the roofers and waterproofer's, and we have the skilled and knowledgeable craftsmen available to meet their roofing needs.

Technological changes in the construction industry will inevitably generate jurisdictional disputes. We have already experienced such disputes over vegetative roofs and solar photovoltaic systems in recent months. We know our traditional work jurisdiction, and our position is very clear on green and solar systems. Now is the time that we make our position known. It is our responsibility and duty to protect this work and secure it for the future of this Union and its members. ■

## Local 12 Business Manager Fights for Jobs

Butch Davidson, Business Manager at Local 12, Bridgeport, CT, took his fight for job legislation straight to Congress. He and John Olson, President of the AFL-CIO in Connecticut, met for the purpose of encouraging Congressman John Larson (D-CT) to support H.R. 426 "GREETA" and Building Star legislation. GREETA, or the Green Roofing Energy Efficiency Tax Act, would lower the depreciation schedule for energy-efficient roof systems, while Building Star legislation would help towards rebuilding inner cities and creating thousands of badly needed construction jobs.



From left, John Olson, President of the Connecticut AFL-CIO; Butch Davidson, Local 12 Business Manager; Congressman John Larson and his aid, retired Senator Biagio "Billy" Ciotto, discuss job legislation.