



Arizona State Senate

Sen. Steve Smith, R-11

Chair, Committee on Commerce and Public Safety

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Senator Smith wants community input for ways to connect job seekers with employers

(Phoenix, State Capitol) ---- The Senate Committee on Commerce and Public Safety, led by Chair Senator Steve Smith, met this morning to discuss why Arizona is experiencing a shortage of qualified workers in the construction industry and other similar trades.

“The goal of what we are trying to accomplish is to find out how to plug in Arizona’s working class with the Arizona jobs that are available in these different construction workforce development sectors. How do we get these people connected?” asked Senator Smith. “Tell us what we could, or should, be doing better as a state. How can we further kick-start our economy?”

Today’s meeting was the first of three hearings where the Committee and stakeholders can discuss best practices and find solutions on how to get more workers into these high paying, quality jobs. Recent data from the group Emsi indicates that Arizona job openings for electricians, plumbers, roofers, telecommunications installers and other similar trades have a shortage of around 9,000 positions, and that number is expected to grow. With the average salary

around \$45,000 a year, these are well paying jobs that are often attainable without a college degree, or in some cases, without a high school diploma.

Local plumbing business owner Mike Brewer asked, “How can we plan for the future of the construction industry if we don’t have the people to support it?” CEO of the American Subcontractors Association of Arizona Carol Floco shared how her company had to refuse around \$30 million worth of bids down because they did not have the workforce to complete the jobs. She also noted that work force training and job development is of huge importance to the subcontractors and a crucial part of the labor shortage puzzle that needs to be addressed.

President and CEO of the Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce Todd Sanders believes this labor shortage extends beyond Arizona and beyond the construction industry. According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, nearly 50 percent of businesses cannot find qualified talent to operate at full efficiency. As a first step to address this, the Phoenix Chamber has set up three tours of local trade workforce development programs for any interested group or business, with the next one scheduled for August 30 at the Maricopa Skills Center.

Today’s speakers asked how can we:

- 1) increase awareness about construction trade labor shortages?
- 2) increase collaborative efforts between interested groups?
- 3) diminish the negative perception that currently stigmatizes these trades?

Answers to these solutions along with national best practices will be discussed more in depth at next month’s meeting, scheduled for September 26 in Senate Hearing Room 1.

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