



Future Workers and Funding

“Mr. Cox, you sure have a lot of insulation in your attic,” Bianca from Brothers Heat and Air told me recently, as she performed biannual maintenance on my air-handling unit. “I am used to seeing rafters in the attic,” she added.

I have been taking pride in our low utility bills since we added insulation after moving to our home 5 years ago, but the star of this story is Bianca—the first female graduate in HVAC from the Herbert J. Hoelter Vocational Training Center. Bianca is on her journey of becoming a skilled craftswoman in the HVAC trade. She did a wonderful job—so much so that I called her instructor at the school and let her employer know as well.

Encouraging folks to enter vocational school to learn a craft hit home to me when fellow board member Kenny Freeman from Petrin LLC in Baton Rouge, Louisiana did a podcast (*The Freeman Report*: <https://www.buzzsprout.com/1188866/8468692>) about Faith Baudoin, who thought she wanted to go into cosmetology until she heard about welding at the age of 16. From tresses to torch tips, nails to nail guns—that’s a beautiful career pivot! Kenny does an outstanding job working with technical schools in his area to promote the career pathways, possibilities, and potential offered by crafts in the construction industry.

Bianca and Faith developing a career in a craft is something that everyone in the construction industry can relate to. We need more skilled craftspeople to install our products correctly. As reported by a recent Construction Users Roundtable (CURT) study, “the construction workforce is growing older, with the industry’s average age rising from 36.8 in 1994, to 42.9 in 2020. By 2030, it is estimated average age will rise to 46.” I know many association members support vocational schools in their local communities, and our industry appreciates this!

Delta T!

Michele M. Jones and I presented at a recent SWICA event, expounding on how our mechanical insulation industry is well positioned to help society, industries, and companies meet their 2030 and 2050 carbon-emission goals. Since our industry’s products are typically used in higher temperature applications, the energy savings—and carbon savings—are more pronounced, because of our steeper “Delta T” temperature differential. I recently learned about Delta T, and now it is my BFF. NIA is reaching out to more audiences to encourage their understanding of insulation’s impact. NIA will present at CURT November event in Florida. At upcoming regional insulation association meetings, Michele and I will talk about how mechanical insulation truly makes the world more sustainable and comfortable—on top of providing acoustical, thermal, and safety benefits.

Legislation that Can Impact the Industry

Insulation protects buildings and their occupants from extremes, and it supports resiliency year after year, but how will the \$1 trillion federal infrastructure bill—the largest long-term investment in America’s infrastructure in almost a century—impact our industry? About \$550 billion of the \$1 trillion is increased funding over current baseline levels over the next 5 years. I have seen accolades from the American Road and Transportation Builders Association, National Utility Contractors Association, National Asphalt Pavement Association, Portland Cement Association, and others. I researched

H.R. 3684 and I see hope for insulation-related products and services. The American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy summarized, “The bipartisan bill has some industrial efficiency and decarbonization provisions. It provides \$500 million for demonstration projects under the Clean Industrial Technology Act enacted by Congress last year. It devotes more than \$2.5 billion to CCUS, some of which will be in the industrial sector. It provides \$150 million to expand the Industrial Assessment Center program that provides energy audits to small industrial firms while also training engineering students in energy management. It also includes \$400 million in grants to help small industrial firms implement audit recommendations.” The bill includes \$100 million over 5 years to accelerate deployment of digital construction technologies such as 3D modeling software. This appears a step in right direction, but we need to continue our outreach on the power of mechanical insulation.

Reader Feedback and “Something’s Happening Here”

I want to thank readers for comments like one I got from Mike Wallace from Geo. V. Hamilton, Inc. in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. His company, like many, is trying to understand what impacts our industry will see in this changing energy market. Of particular interest to Mike was Senator Joe Manchin’s (D-WV) energy infrastructure bill proposed by the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. He sent me an article from *ENR* magazine from early August. I checked to see if it would be folded into H.R. 3684. I took a clue from Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, who famously said “we will have to pass the bill to see what’s in it,” and skimmed H.R. 3684 to see if any of Manchin’s proposals got into the final bill. It appears they did. For instance, on page 1551, “The Secretary shall establish a program to support the development of at least 4 regional clean hydrogen hubs... and to the maximum extent practicable, at least 2 regional clean hydrogen hubs shall be located in the regions of the United States with the greatest natural gas resources.”

There is \$8 billion allocated for just these 4 hubs. Per *Energy.gov*, “Hydrogen is transported and delivered as a liquid when high-volume transport is needed in the absence of pipelines. To liquefy hydrogen, it must be cooled to cryogenic temperatures through a liquefaction process by cooling it to below -253°C (-423°F). Once hydrogen is liquefied it can be stored at the liquefaction plant in large, insulated tanks.” I suspect this bodes well for the sales and service of mechanical insulation up in the Marcellus shale area. To say that our CO_2 and hydrogen infrastructure is in its infancy is an understatement.

I Am NIA!

Because we want to grow the membership *Together for Tomorrow*, NIA would like everyone to share what they find beneficial about their NIA membership. During our recent Board Meeting and Long-Range Planning Session, Laura Dover came up with an “I Am NIA” campaign idea, and I love it. I encourage you to participate in our new social media campaign by recording a short (30 seconds or less) video of yourself. Include the following sentences:

“I am (Name) of (Company Name), and we provide (service/product) in (location). I value (one sentence on your favorite benefit or aspect of NIA). That’s why I am NIA.”

To see an example, watch my video at www.insulation.org/IamNIA and see why I am NIA. Perhaps you are NIA because, quite simply, our industry makes the world more sustainable and comfortable.

Strike a Pose and Post

Thanks to everyone sending in pictures with *Insulation Outlook* from around the country. Be sure to follow NIA on all of its social media channels, and find me on LinkedIn.

David J. Cox
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National Insulation Association