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## **United States**

### **OSHA Announces Measures to Improve Whistleblower Protection Program**

OSHA announced on August 1, that it would be implementing additional measures to improve its Whistleblower Protection Program. The new measures will include changes in structure, training, program policy and internal systems.

"The ability of workers to speak out and exercise their legal rights without fear of retaliation is crucial to many of the legal protections and safeguards that all Americans value," said OSHA Assistant Secretary Dr. David Michaels.

"The new measures will significantly strengthen OSHA's enforcement of the 21 whistleblower laws that Congress charged OSHA with administering."

Some of the more notable changes include:

- OSHA's Whistleblower Protection Program will now report directly to the assistant secretary instead of being housed in the Directorate of Enforcement.
- OSHA will hold a national whistleblower training conference in September that will be attended by all whistleblower investigators from federal and state plans.
- OSHA will release a new edition of the Whistleblower Investigations Manual that updates current procedures and includes information since the manual was last updated in 2003.

For more information on these measures, [read OSHA's news release](#).

### **Department of Labor Going After Worker Misclassification**

The Department of Labor has been hard at work as it has been going after employers misclassifying workers. A little over a month since it announced its proposed funding to establish a new multi-agency "Misclassification Initiative," the DOL has already cracked down in multiple states, including [Florida](#) and [Connecticut](#), just to name a few.

### **FASB Votes in Favor of Construction Industry FASB Coalition**

On Wednesday, July 27, FASB voted on a final rule that fully accepted the Construction Industry FASB Coalition (CIFIC) compromise disclosure table and removed all detrimental aspects of the original and subsequent disclosures that would have presented severe financial, competitive and market risks to employers contributing to

multiemployer plans.

The routine annual disclosure of withdrawal liability calculations that were originally proposed in ED-715 have been removed from the final standard, as well as the original proposal to add disclosure about funding liability for retiree health care coverage. This is a great victory for our industry and is a culmination of an entire year's worth of legislative efforts.

### **House Votes Down another Proposal to Prevent Funding for the Davis-Bacon Act**

On July 15, the House voted down another proposal targeting the Davis-Bacon Act. This proposal was in the form of an amendment to the 2012 energy and water development (H.R. 2354) spending measure, which would have prohibited funding for the Davis-Bacon Act on projects funded by H.R. 2354.

As reported last month, there are still bills in the House and Senate respectively (H.R. 735 and S.119) seeking to ban the requirement of PLAs in awarding government contracts, but neither bill has done much since being introduced at the beginning of the year.

### **Congress and President Obama Reach New Debt-Ceiling Deal**

Congress reached an agreement to raise the debt ceiling on July 31 and agreed on \$2.4 trillion worth of spending cuts over the next 10 years. The deal will raise the debt ceiling in two stages. First, with an initial \$1 trillion to prevent immediate default, and second, \$1.4 trillion to be proposed by a bi-partisan congressional committee made up of six democrats and six republicans from the House and Senate.

This committee will be tasked with writing a bill, by November 23 that will reduce deficits by another \$1.4 trillion over 10 years.

FCA will continue to monitor the situation as this super committee discusses and decides upon budget cuts.

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## **Canada**

### **Canadian Construction Association may Launch New Research Institute**

The Canadian Construction Association (CCA) is considering establish a new research institute to identify industry needs and develop best practices in partnership with private and public sectors.

“We have enough problems in the industry that contractors have been discussing, but solutions have not been found to many of these problems,” said Calgary University professor, Janaka Ruwanpura.

“We should put our heads together and do collaborative research at a national level and see how to solve these issues.”

If developed, this institute could produce invaluable information and FCA will continue to monitor its status.

### **Industry Leaders Recruiting From Non-Traditional Labour Sources**

As Canada’s construction workforce continues to age, industry leaders have begun turning to non-traditional labour sources.

“We are making an all-out effort to recruit from non-traditional labour sources such as youth, women, Aboriginal people, workers from other industries and foreign workers,” said George Gritziotis, Executive Director, Construction Sector Council (CSC).

“We’re working on government and industry programs that focus on recruitment, apprenticeship and training, certification, pan-Canadian standards and foreign credential recognition.”

The Canadian Apprentice Forum (CAF-FCA) met with the Aboriginal Apprenticeship Board of Ontario (AABO) and the

discussion included Aboriginal employment initiatives, models and mechanisms to connect Aboriginal people to construction employment.

The CAF-FCA has also been rolling out skills workshops for individuals who work on Aboriginal training and career development initiatives.

For more information on these workshops, [email Emily Arrowsmith](#) of CAF-FCA.

### **Municipal Infrastructure Lending Program Provides Federal Loans to Aid Municipalities**

The federal government announced that 12 municipalities and 23 projects were approved for more than \$127 million in low-cost infrastructure loans, which are being used to upgrade residential infrastructure, local transportation and wastewater treatment facilities.

These low-cost loans are provided by Canada's Federal Economic Action Plan, which is providing \$2 billion over two years in direct low-cost loans to municipalities.

London, Oxford County, Dryden, Toronto and Wawa were among the other municipalities to receive the low-cost infrastructure loans.

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