



## **Fighting for Policy Changes That Benefit You**

By Mark Valentini, PHCC Director of Legislative Affairs

Greetings, fellow industry professionals.

For some of you, this is my introduction as your new director of Legislative Affairs, so I'll share a bit about my professional background.

I got my start on Capitol Hill in 1997 as a U.S. Senate intern. From there, I was a congressional staffer for a U.S. Senator before moving on to work in campaign fundraising. I have been a lobbyist for a little more than a decade, with the bulk of that time spent in the financial services and transportation industries. For the last five years, I have lobbied for the trucking industry, working on the same type of workforce development and apprenticeship issues we have at PHCC.

I started with PHCC in late March and immediately got to work drinking from the firehose to prepare for our early May Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. Two of our priority issues at that conference, and for the remainder of this Congress, are infrastructure spending and unfair utility competition.

### **Putting a Grade on Our Infrastructure Problem**

We continue to push for a comprehensive infrastructure bill that addresses not only road and bridge projects but our country's aging and failing water and wastewater systems. Approving adequate, long-term funding for the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act, Drinking Water State Revolving Funds and similar programs would create business for our members and address significant public health and environmental issues. To give you a sense of the magnitude of the problem, the American Society of Civil Engineers gave our water infrastructure a "D" grade and our wastewater infrastructure a "D+" mark on its annual infrastructure report card. On top of that, the American Water Works Association estimates it will cost \$1 trillion to fix our current water system problems and meet demand for the next 25 years.

We have, to say the least, a politically divided Congress. Infrastructure spending is one of the few areas for bipartisan cooperation left as we head into the 2020 election cycle. As projects break ground thanks to federal funding, Congress members from both parties and the president will be able to point to tangible and concrete accomplishments for their constituents. There's precedent for it as recently as 2015, when a Congress at odds with the president passed the first long-term transportation bill in more than a decade.

### **Addressing an Unfair Business Advantage**

Unfair utility competition is another area of concern we want lawmakers to address. Major utility companies across the country are increasingly using their name recognition, market power and existing customer base to encroach on contractors' business operations by offering installation and repair services for air conditioning and heating units, water and sewer lines, washing machines, water heaters and more. This sets up an unfair playing field because utilities have the benefit of their ratepayer-subsidized resources, their status as state-sanctioned monopolies and unlimited market access in their service area.

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PHCC continues to challenge unfair utility practices impacting p-h-c contractors. To ensure fair competition, we need an even playing field that completely separates public and investor-owned utilities from their affiliate service companies and prohibits utilities from using ratepayer-subsidized resources and their status as state-authorized monopolies to gain an unfair business advantage.

The infrastructure spending and unfair competition issues both have significant implications for our members, and we plan to continue our fight for policy changes that benefit you.

Looking ahead, we also plan to revitalize our Political Action Committee to strengthen our voice in the upcoming 2020 election cycle. The decisions Congress

members make affect our businesses every day, and we plan to be active in putting our financial and political support behind candidates who have demonstrated that they understand the issues our industry faces and that they support small businesses.

*Mark Valentini is the Director of Legislative Affairs for PHCC—National Association. A seasoned professional with more than 20 years of experience on Capitol Hill and with several national trade associations, Valentini applies his expertise in public policy, workforce and training, and insurance and tax matters to advocate on behalf of all PHCC members.*