

Senate Transportation Committee

Act 89 of 2013: The Benefits and Need for Transportation Funding

7/17/2018

Dear Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Chris Petrone and I am the Legislative Director for the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 66. Our organization represents about 7,800 working men and women that reside in thirty three counties in Western Pennsylvania and three counties in Eastern Ohio. Our members operate and maintain heavy equipment on all types of construction projects including energy, building development, and infrastructure projects.

Act 89 was an absolute necessity in regards to the infrastructure needs of our Commonwealth. Study after study agreed that our infrastructure was in disrepair and badly needed a significant increase in funding just to slow the deterioration. Our infrastructure had gotten so bad it was becoming a significant safety concern. With all that said, Act 89 was also a critical piece to enhancing the Pennsylvania economy. I will speak specifically to our membership; but, many other industries and trades people have had similar experiences to that of which our Local has had. Local 66 alone has seen more than a 20% increase in man hours on infrastructure projects and that number has grown year after year as the funding has ramped up. To put that in perspective, in 2017 alone our members worked over 750,000 man hours more than in 2013 when the Act was passed. That is our Local alone! Clearly, Act 89 has been a true job creator and these are quality jobs with good pay and typically offer health care and retirement benefits.

While Act 89 was a basic requirement from a safety and maintenance standpoint, it was not enough. More needs to be done. The funding number was large; but, fell short of fulfilling our State's full need. The Federal Government needs to do its part and we must urge those in Congress to pass an

infrastructure bill that can compliment what we have already done. Furthermore, we need to work with Congress to allow the tolling of interstates, which would create huge opportunity to raising funds and paying for maintenance of highly traveled interstates like I-80.

Lastly, with the work Act 89 has created and the work any future enhancements to our infrastructure spending would create we need to have a focus on workplace safety. There is a piece of legislation that this body has passed that now sits in the State House that needs to be passed. This is Senate Bill 172 that allows speeding cameras to be put into work zones. This program has been instituted in Maryland with great success. This is a simple measure that is proven to save lives and reduce accidents in work zones. All Pennsylvania workers deserve a safe workplace.

In conclusion, Act 89 was an incredible start to reversing the deterioration our infrastructure is experiencing. It has created a safer Commonwealth for our commuters and an economic boon for our workers. If we are able to expand what has been done and allow interstate's to be tolled and pass a federal Highway Bill that offers real and substantial dollars we would be in great position to rebuild and even create an infrastructure for the 21st century.