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SHORT CUTS

Construction has wind in its sails

Construction employment is up, so is industry spending. And while there's a bit of a decline in industry momentum, it's not expected to be anything long-term.

The latest government numbers depict a healthy U.S. construction industry, with favorable prospects headed into 2025. Bureau of Labor Statistics numbers released Nov. 1 revealed that U.S. construction employment rose by 8,000 jobs in October. Industry pay saw a nice hike, too.

"The job gains in construction occurred even though hurricanes in the Southeast probably dragged down hiring in previously fast-growing states," said Ken Simonson, the Associated General Contractors' chief economist. "Contractors are hiring and raising hourly pay at above-average rates in an effort to keep projects on track."

The AGC cited government figures, and reported that construction employment in October totaled 8,310,000, seasonally adjusted, an increase of 8,000 from September. The sector has added 223,000 jobs or 2.8 percent during the past 12 months, double the 1.4 percent increase for total nonfarm employment. Over the past 12 months, nonresidential contractors added 178,400 employees (3.7 percent), while residential construction firms added 44,500 workers (1.3 percent).

Average hourly earnings for production and nonsupervisory employees in construction – covering most onsite craft workers as well as many office workers – climbed by 4.5 percent over the year to \$36.23 per hour.

The increase topped the gain in overall private sector pay for production workers, which rose 4.1 percent over 12 months to \$30.48 per hour. That difference in hourly pay meant that construction workers earned a wage "premium" of 18.9 percent compared to the overall private sector.

The AGC suggested that construction employment should continue to grow, especially as parts of the country rebuild from hurricane damages. But the usual worker shortages remain. "Hurricane season will end, but labor shortages aren't going to go away just because we turned a page on the calendar," said Jeffrey D. Shoaf, the AGC's chief executive officer.

Meanwhile, Dodge Data and Analytics reported on Nov. 7 that slower planning across several segments drove weaker activity, dragging down the Dodge Momentum Index by 5.3 percent for October. The DMI is a monthly measure of the value of nonresidential building projects going into planning, shown to lead construction spending for nonresidential buildings by a full year.

"In addition to data center planning normalizing, a moderate pullback in the number of planning projects for several other nonresidential sectors also contributed to the decline in the Dodge Momentum Index for October," said Sarah Martin, associate director of forecasting at Dodge Construction Network.

"Regardless, owners and developers remain confident in next year's market conditions, and the planning queue remains poised to spur stronger construction activity in 2025, following deeper rate cuts by the Fed."

Quotable

"It's great to be here. It's great to be anywhere."
—Keith Richards (1943-)



ONE OF THE TWO HOTEL towers, left, at the Firekeepers Casino is undergoing a major "refresh" of its interior rooms. In an effort led by Clark Construction and mechanical contractor Andy J. Egan, all of the tower's 243 rooms are being renovated. A buck hoist attached to the tower, at left, provides the trades with easier access to the rooms.

'Refresh' at Firekeepers yields renovated hotel rooms

By Marty Mulcahy
Editor

BATTLE CREEK – For guests, it's fun and relaxation as usual at the Firekeepers Casino and Hotel, where gaming tables, slots and restaurants are a 24-hour magnet, and a pair of hotel towers on site give them a place to spend the night.

But behind the scenes – as much as possible – tradespeople are working on a "refresh" of the eight-story Tower 1, in a project that will result in the wholesale renovation of its 243 rooms. Clark Construction Co. is managing the project, working closely with mechanical contractor Andy J. Egan, whose tradespeople are tasked with the major part of the project – replacing 100 percent of the drain and sanitary stack pipe in the tower.

Partnering with Egan, the facility's preferred mechanical contractor, Clark was tasked with developing an approach to the work that does not require shutting down the entire tower, that maximizes revenue, and minimizes impact to guests.

Phase I of the project is ongoing, affecting the first two floors of the building.

The trades are scheduled to exit the building for several weeks to allow Firekeepers maximum use during the site's expected rush between Thanksgiving and

the New Year. Then Phase II is expected to start Jan. 25, with work commencing on the tower's third and fourth

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CUTTING 1.5-INCH copper pipe in the utility plant at the Firekeepers project are (l-r) Ron Morsaw (Plumbers and Pipe Fitters Local 174) and James Blair (Plumbers and Pipe Fitters Local 333). They're employed by Andy J. Egan.



SANDING DRYWALL in a second-floor guest room that's getting refurbished at Firekeepers Hotel in Battle Creek is Jeremy Vergeson of Michigan Painters District Council 1M- Local 845. He's employed by Murray Painting.

Union label may be harder to find today, but the 'bug' still matters

(From the IBEW)

In the early days of union organization, long before the National Labor Relations Act of 1935, many struggling unions survived because of one factor: Brother and sister unionists demanded and purchased union label goods. Because of public pressure, many manufacturers had to recognize the union to stay in business.



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THE 'UNION BUG' for Grand Blanc Printing, which prints this paper. A bug on printed matter denotes the work of a union printer.

The union label is as rich in tradition as just about any emblem in history. From the days of early Rome when Numa Pompilius organized the crafts of his day into guilds, various groups of orga-

nized workers have used symbols to distinguish their products in the marketplace.

The guilds from which modern labor unions are directly

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Harris won majority of union vote, but divisions are clear

By Marty Mulcahy
Editor

Representing only about 10 percent of the American workforce, in raw numbers the nation's unions are a diminished political force compared to say, 50 years ago.

Yet the labor movement's ability to harness its collective power continues to make it an outside interest group in the nation's elections. But is that power still "collective?" Did union members come through for organized labor's overwhelming pick for U.S. president, Kamala Harris? In a word, "yes." But labor's impact isn't what it used to be. And it's evident that there was more at stake than pocketbook issues promoted by unions.

Said a *Politico* headline on Nov. 6: "Unions to Democrats: Don't blame us for Tuesday's losses. For months, Democrats fretted that they were losing their grip on blue-collar union voters. On Tuesday, they turned out for Harris." President-elect Donald Trump defeated Vice President Harris on Nov. 5, easily winning the popular vote and all the swing states.

But exit polling released by Fox News found that Vice President Kamala Harris won union households by 55-43 percent, roughly the same as President Biden's margin in 2020. Exit polling sponsored by the National Election Pool consortium showed union households supporting Harris, 53-45 percent. In Michigan, the margin was wider: exit polling showed 58-40 percent union household support for Harris, according to the *Washington Post*.

'There is more than jobs at stake this election'

All the polls said the numbers were preliminary.

For perspective, national exit polling showed Hilary Clinton with an eight-point union household advantage over Trump in 2016. In 2012, Obama's union

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Massive union election effort yields few wins for labor

By Mark Gruenberg
PAI Staff Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. (PAI) – What was probably the most massive union political effort ever produced some down-ballot wins on Election Day, but not the victory that almost all unions endorsed, of Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris.

With almost all the popular votes counted, Donald Trump, the former Republican president, had a clear majority of the popular vote and carried all the swing states where unionists concentrated their efforts.

"We wanted to say THANK YOU," the AFL-CIO e-mailed. "This has been a roller coaster of an election year, with emotions running high and stakes that are even higher. We are so proud of everything that our labor family has done to dig deep and elect

(Continued on Page 4)

Big jump in union election petitions not likely to last

By Marty Mulcahy
Editor

Union workplace election petitions in the U.S. rose 27 percent in the 12 months prior to Oct. 1, reflecting a continuing trend of workers embracing organizing labor – or at least trying to.

The National Labor Relations Board announced Oct. 14 that it had received 3,286 union election petitions, which was double the number compared to 2021, when President Biden took office.

Likewise, worker activism extended to the realm of unfair labor practice charges: during that same 12-month period from 2023 to 2024, the filing of workplace ULPs increased 7 percent, to 21,292 cases. In sum, the NLRB's field offices received the highest total case intake in more than a decade.

"The surge in cases we've received in the last few years is a testament to workers knowing and exercising their rights under the National Labor Relations Act and to our board agents' accessibility and respectful engagement with them," said NLRB General Counsel Jennifer Abruzzo. "Our committed and talented NLRB staff continue to process cases with professionalism and care, despite working with limited resources. I urge Congress to fully fund the NLRB so that employers, unions, and workers receive prompt and meaningful case resolutions."

After being "flat-funded" for almost a decade, in FY 2023 Congress gave the NLRB a \$25 million increase, which ended a hiring freeze, prevented furloughs, and allowed the NLRB to backfill some critical staff vacancies. However, in FY 2024, Congress flat-funded the NLRB at \$299.2 million at a time "when more resources remain desperately needed," the NLRB said.

While the surge in workers seeking union organizing petitions at work is a promising sign for organized labor – the numbers have not moved the needle on impacting overall union membership in the

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Family welcomes new wheelchair ramp

GLADSTONE – A new wheelchair ramp erected last month by union volunteers will ease the mobility of a 9-year-old boy who has spina bifida.

The ramp was built last month by volunteers from the Upper Peninsula Construction Council and the Upper Peninsula Building Trades Council. The labor was donated, the materials were funded by the Michigan Elks.

A crew of eight union members built the ramp, which was sorely needed by the family. "It was said that his mother was carrying him out on her back and loading him into his wheelchair on the sidewalk," said Michigan Building and Construction Trades Council Business Rep. Ryan Stern. "With this ramp he'll be able to go in and out by himself and he's super excited about that."

Lumber and other materials for the 35-foot ramp came from a \$2,500 donation by the Michigan Elks. "We're absolutely ecstatic that we're able to give back to the communities in which we work and live," said Upper Peninsula Construction Council Executive Director Mike Smith.

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BUILDING TRADES volunteers build a ramp in Gladstone to ease access to the home of a nine-year-old with spina bifida.

Photo credit: UPCC



Viewpoints



Labor's values won't change

Statements on the 2024 election:

Presidential administrations change, but the labor movement's values do not. We stand for the freedom to organize and for the right to collectively bargain. We stand for solidarity – the kind that is built when working people stand together to take on the biggest, richest bosses and the most powerful extremist politicians. Most importantly, we know how to fight back when anyone comes after our freedoms.

This result is a blow for every worker who depends on our elected leaders to fight for our jobs, our unions and our contracts. We organized for months to produce a nearly 17-point advantage for Vice President Kamala Harris with union members (the final margin, by a Fox News poll, was 12 percent). But it is clear that the economic struggle working-class people are facing is causing real pain and neither party has sufficiently addressed it.

Now we are faced with the reality of a second Donald Trump term. The *Project 2025* agenda promises to dismantle labor unions because we are a pillar of democracy and a check on power. We've seen assaults on our fundamental rights before. In the days, months, and years ahead, labor's task will be to defend working people when it happens again. The labor movement gives voice and clarity to the struggles of working people – that's what we do, and what we've always done.

Every workplace we organize is a victory for democracy. Every contract we bargain for is a step toward a fairer economy. Every strike is a lesson for rich bosses that they can't keep the working class down. No one – not Donald Trump or JD Vance, nor any one CEO – can stop solidarity.

Organized labor is the path forward. In unions, people have power to build a stable foundation for themselves and their families. To say, "It's Better in a Union," is not simply a slogan – it's the way to level the playing field and create a path to economic security for every working person. The nearly 13 million union members of the AFL-CIO won't be divided and we won't back down. We will be there for each other and we will fight every step of the way for every worker in this country, no matter who sits in the Oval Office.

Liz Shuler
AFL-CIO President

With millions of contacts – member-to-member on jobsites, in homes and union halls, at rallies and community events, through social media, email and mail – LIUNA powered a massive, sophisticated election effort.

We are proud of our members and of our leaders, whose tireless work was driven by a passion for our country, faith in the power of unions to improve lives, belief in facts and truth, and an unwavering confidence in decency, character, and cooperation.

Although the president-elect's actions are riddled with attacks on working people and their unions, as patriots we nonetheless congratulate him and accept the election results. Disappointment, yes – despair, never. We will hold the president-elect accountable to working men and women and stand ready to work with him and all elected officials to create real opportunities for our members.

The machine we built will live on and grow stronger as we fight to protect investment in our critical infrastructure, fight to defend policies that support good wages and benefits, and fight for the fundamental freedom to join a union.

Brent Booker
General President
Laborers International Union of North America

Firekeepers hotel rooms renovated

(Continued from Page 1)

floors. When we visited the site in late October, 16 rooms had been completed. During any eight-day period, Clark and Egan anticipate plumbing piping will be replaced in 14-18 rooms. Completion of the entire project is expected in November 2025.

Clark Senior Project Manager Chris Martin said about 30 tradespeople were on site last month, with the project peaking next year at 50-60 Hardhats. "This is the first time I've worked with Egan, and I'd say they've hit it out of the park," said Martin. "I can't say enough good things about what they've done and the work of the tradespeople out here. There has been lots of communication and coordination."

Martin and the project team worked with Firekeepers to develop a puzzle-like schematic for rehabilitating the hotel rooms, two floors at a time. They're seeking to minimize noise, vibration and other impacts on spaces above and below.

On the northeast side of Tower 1, glass has been removed from the suites that occupy that portion of the building, and a buck hoist has been anchored to the building to allow movement of personnel and materials.

Leading the mechanical portion of the project for Andy J. Egan is Design-Build Project



A GROUP OF CHILLERS provide the backdrop at Firekeepers Casino Hotel for this group of pipe trades workers, who we asked to assemble for a photo. They include (l-r) Plumbers and Pipe Fitters Local 333 BA Joe Michilizzi, Local 333 BA Nick Asher, Andy J. Egan Design-Build Project Manager Joe Williams (UA Local 174), Joel Kinney (Local 333), Todd Stuke (Local 333), Ron Morsaw (Local 174), James Blair (Local 333), and Ryan Vought (Local 333).

Manager Joe Williams. "The floors are fairly repetitious, and that really helps," Williams said. "We've learned a lot from what we've done, and that should help us as we move along."

Located and highly visible along I-94 at 11 Mile Rd., Firekeepers Casino opened in 2009. This first hotel tower opened in 2012, and a second 202-room hotel tower opened at the site in

2021.

This refresh project on 12-year-old Tower 1 has been timed with the necessary replacement of the building's cast iron drain and stack pipes. A number of leaks developed in the system due to corrosion caused by chlorine emanating from the first-floor pool in the hotel. A mechanical malfunction allowed the chlorine to enter the drain stack

that also served the hotel, which contaminated the entire system.

The fix: permanently separating the pool and hotel drains and stacks, removing the existing pipe, followed by the installation of a relatively new product by Charlotte Pipe – Edge HP Iron, which has high-performance coatings to resist deterioration. The work has led to a 10-week closure of the hotel's pool for work on replacement of its piping.

"Working on the pool was a lot of work and it had to be done in a short period of time," Williams said. "This kind of contamination isn't common, but it does happen. Replacing the pipe at the pool has been our biggest concern, and it went really well."

With a fairly consistent layout from floor to floor in the tower, Martin said on one hand, "it's a relatively simple job." But the team is also working in an active hotel – they can't just start chipping away tile to install new plumbing whenever they want. "Room shutdowns are a real challenge to coordinate," he said. "And we're always concerned with getting in and out of our workspace, not making noise, logistics, phasing, coordinating with the owner – those are our challenges, but we're doing well."

Can it get any worse? Crowds on demand

By Jim Hightower

Many people feel that America's political campaigns have become vapid PR hustles with little connection to the real-life concerns of workaday people.

Luckily, Adam Swart says he has the fix for such voter

malaise: Just add a more professional level of vapid to the process, he says, and you can reduce the need for having actual voters involved in campaigning.

Swart is a for-hire politico who's been hailed as a "visionary" and a "business rockstar"

for launching an outfit he calls: Crowds on Demand. His entrepreneurial concept is as simple as it is devious. Rather than the tedium of strategizing and organizing people into grassroots campaigns, just pay his COD team to stage a "movement" – you know, like Hollywood would do. Indeed, Swart's operation is even headquartered in the center of Hollywood make believe, Beverly Hills.

But let him sell his own product. He says he can create and staff a turn-key political front group for clients. "We provide everything," exclaims COD's website, "including the people, the materials, and even the ideas... We can help you plan

the strategy and execute it."

How happy – if you're a corporate schemer needing to win or defeat a proposal, but you don't have any grassroots base of support, Crowds On Demand promises to fake it for you. "We can set up protests, rallies, demonstrations... and even create non-profit organizations to advance your agenda." It's basically an Astroturf campaign operation, but with even less turf and more plastic.

If there is one thing the American majority would agree on today, it is that the last thing our political system needs is more PR trickery, issue fakery, and political hustlers.

How about we give a little more honesty a try?



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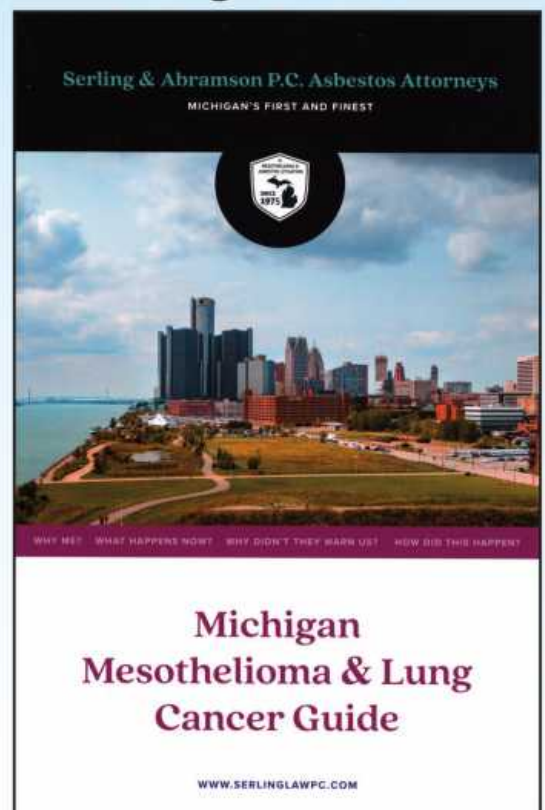
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Outdoors



Best practices for deer hunting

By Katie Gervasi
Michigan Department of
Natural Resources

Opening day of the traditional firearm deer hunting season starts Nov. 15, and many hunters have been busy scouting land, watching trail cameras and preparing equipment.

To ensure a safe season, Michigan Department of Natural Resources conservation officers are sharing best practices and tips to help hunters avoid the most common violations and mistakes they see every year.

Here are 10 best practices for hunters to remember:

Properly tag your deer.

Before field-dressing or moving a deer, kill tags must be filled out to include the month and date the deer was harvested, animal gender and number of antler points, if any. Kill tags must be properly placed on the deer. Stick the tag to a piece of string, wire or a zip-tie that can be attached to the deer.

Conservation officers often see the wrong kill tag on game – such as fish or turkey licenses on deer. Often, this is a simple mistake made in the dark that can be corrected easily by retagging the deer as soon as you notice the error.

Remember that reporting your deer within 72 hours of harvest is just as important as tagging it. A great deal of information hunters need to know is available on the DNR Hunt Fish app. Regulation summaries are also available from hunting license vendors across the state.

Know your firearm and how it functions. Properly handling your firearm is an important part of being a safe hunter. Take the time to familiarize yourself with your firearm and make sure it is properly sighted and functioning before you go hunting. If it's been a while since you used your firearm, consider visiting a local shooting range to practice. Many ranges have extended hours this time of year. You can locate a shooting range through the DNR Hunt Fish app.



KNOW MICHIGAN'S deer hunting laws. Baiting and feeding are banned in the entire Lower Peninsula, except for hunters with disabilities who meet specific requirements. MDNR photos

Know your target and what's beyond it. Know the area you'll be hunting, including nearby buildings and properties. No one may hunt with a firearm within 450 feet of an occupied structure, including buildings, dwellings, homes, residences, cabins, barns or structures used for farm operations unless they have permission from the landowner.

Each year, conservation officers investigate property damage caused by firearms. Rifle rounds travel long distances – hunters are responsible for where bullets end up.

Respect landowner rights. Always respect posted no-trespassing signs and property boundaries. If a deer runs onto private property, the hunter cannot retrieve it without the landowner's permission. Conservation officers usually are contacted when trespass disagreements escalate and a resolution cannot be reached.

If you'll be hunting near

someone else's property, contact the landowner ahead of time; don't wait until you're tracking game. Most of the time, a friendly call or visit to your neighbor will remedy the situation. And remember, all hunting regulations apply on private property.

Share public land. Research and scout the land you plan to

hunt before opening day. State-managed land is a popular place to hunt. Conservation officers often respond to confrontations over hunting spots, blocking of roads and illegally posting "no trespassing" or "no hunting" signs on state-managed public land. Conservation officers, who are often asked to help resolve these



KILL TAGS should be filled out properly, including the month and date the deer was harvested, animal gender and number of antler points. Properly place a tag on a deer before field-dressing or moving it.

disputes, said hunter confrontations over hunting spots are often due to last-minute hunters who randomly pick a spot.

Type 2 ground blinds on public land are just that – public. Regardless of who constructed or tends these blinds, when they're on state-managed public land, they are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Public land cannot be posted or reserved.

Tree stands used on public land must be portable and have one of the following affixed in legible English that can easily be read from the ground: the user's name and address, complete driver's license number or DNR Sportcard number. Hunting platforms cannot be affixed or attached to any tree by nails, screws or bolts.

Leave the land better than you found it. Practice the "leave no trace" ethic and don't litter. Whatever is brought into the woods must be taken back out. It is the responsibility of all individuals to be good environmental stewards and clean up after themselves.

Leaving propane bottles, hand-warmer wrappers, food wrappers, bottles and other trash is illegal and may result in a fine.

Wear hunter orange. During firearm deer hunting season, deer hunters are required by law to wear a cap, hat, vest, jacket or raincoat of hunter orange. The orange must be worn on the outermost layer of clothing at all times and visible from all directions, regardless of hunting on private or shared public land, even if hunting from within a blind.

Hunter orange garments may have a camouflage pattern as long as the pattern is at least 50 percent hunter orange. The DNR recommends wearing as much hunter orange as possible to increase visibility to other hunters. Hunter orange does not deter deer.

Know and follow baiting regulations. Deer baiting and feeding are banned in the entire Lower Peninsula.

In the Upper Peninsula, baiting may occur from Sept. 15 to Jan. 1. Bait volume at any hunting site cannot exceed 2 gallons. Bait must be spread on the ground and in an area that measures a minimum of 10 feet by 10 feet or its equivalent. Mechanical spin-cast feeders are

legal to use provided the feeder does not distribute more than the maximum volume allowed. On commercial forest land, bait must be brought in each night, unless the landowner has given permission. Use bait sparingly to help curb the spread of diseases like bovine tuberculosis and chronic wasting disease.

Hunt in-season, during legal hours. During firearm season, a hunter may legally shoot game starting 30 minutes before local sunrise and until 30 minutes after local sunset. Anyone who witnesses or suspects hunting outside of legal hours should immediately call or text the DNR's Report All Poaching hotline at 800-292-7800. Fast reporting makes it more likely that a conservation officer will identify the suspect.

Be respectful to other hunters. Michigan law prohibits anyone from obstructing or interfering with the lawful taking of animals. Hunter harassment – when a person or organization intentionally sabotages another hunter's quality opportunity to take game is a misdemeanor offense. Examples include spraying repellent around a hunter's blind, creating loud noises and/or barriers that prevent or deter a hunter or game from accessing an area, or destroying other hunter's equipment such as trail cameras and blinds.

Anyone who feels targeted by hunter harassment or who witnesses a natural resource violation should immediately call or text the Report All Poaching Hotline at 800-292-7800. Information can be left anonymously. Monetary rewards may be offered for information that leads to the prosecution of violators.

For more information on the firearm deer season, hunting safety, lands open to hunting, hunting regulations and more, visit Michigan.gov/Hunting. The 2024 Michigan deer hunting preview is also available.

Michigan conservation officers are fully licensed law enforcement officers who provide natural resources protection, ensure recreational safety and protect residents through general law enforcement and conducting lifesaving operations in the communities they serve.

Learn more at Michigan.gov/ConservationOfficers.

ALL BUILDING TRADESMEN

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