

PRESS RELEASE
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NUCA Chairman Testifies To Congress On Business Vax Mandate *Administration Mandate Damages Gains of New \$1.2 Trillion Core Infrastructure Law*

(Fairfax, Va.) – The chairman of the National Utility Contractors Association (NUCA) testified today at a Congressional roundtable that the Biden Administration Covid vaccine mandate for private businesses will substantially damage the economic gains promised from their new core infrastructure law.

“The Biden Administration’s Covid vaccine mandates are going to make our industry’s existing workforce labor shortages even worse,” said NUCA Chairman Lauren Atwell. “The loss of any employee, especially critical supervisory positions, could result in major project delays or project shortfalls. We’re also concerned about government mandates that could affect changes in contracts if our members are unable to have enough employees to work.”

The newly enacted Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act promises to deliver \$1.2 trillion in new infrastructure funds to the states, and over \$200 billion has the potential to be used by underground utility contractors for new projects. Every billion Congress sends to the U.S. construction industry will create about 28,000 jobs, according to several studies on federal resource utilization.

However, for several years the utility construction industry has been unable to find enough able-bodied or qualified employees to fill our positions, despite paying above-market wages and offering benefits. There are an estimated 232,000 unfilled jobs in the construction industry today, with 61% of contractor firms reporting project delays because of labor shortages.

NUCA is not opposed to voluntary Covid-19 vaccines and has encourage industry members to participate. However, this association objects to mandated vaccine requirements because of the potential for further disruptions to our workforce. Because of the outdoor working conditions found across utility construction projects, the workplace is considered a low-risk environment for flu illnesses. A large number of construction workers have indicated they will leave a mandated company (100 or more employees) to go find work with smaller companies not affected by the OSHA standard. These new employees will be welcomed by companies already hard-pressed to find employees for their job openings.

The mandate also places a tremendous paperwork load on employers, along with significant OSHA fines if this paperwork is incomplete. The costs that this mandate demands are also going to be shouldered by private businesses. Who will pay for these new requirements, and will the federal government share in

these expenses? There are a lot of questions that need to be answered, and the construction industry is not hearing any answers from OSHA or the Biden Administration.

“You just gave the utility construction industry over \$200 billion in resources. Those resources will only be put to work if I have people to perform these jobs. And if I can’t retain the skilled men and women to build these projects because of federal government mandates--that’s something Congress needs to think about,” concluded Chairman Atwell.

Chairman Atwell participated in the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Republican Member Roundtable held on the Biden Administration’s employer vaccine mandate on Tuesday, December 7. The roundtable was held in the committee’s imposing hearing room, located in Room 2167 of the Rayburn House Office Building. More information about the roundtable can be found on the committee’s GOP website, [republicans-transportation.house.gov](https://www.republicans-transportation.house.gov).

Mr. Lauren Atwell is the Chairman of the Board of NUCA, the top executive leadership position at America’s leading utility construction industry association. He is also the chief operating officer of Petticoat-Schmitt Civil Contractors, located in Jacksonville, Florida. Petticoat-Schmitt builds heavy civil infrastructure in northern Florida and southern Georgia, including highways, bridges, and water and wastewater utility systems.

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About The National Utility Contractors Association (NUCA)

Founded in 1964, the National Utility Contractors Association represents nearly 1,700 U.S. utility and excavation contractors, manufacturers, and suppliers who provide the materials and workforce to build and maintain our nation’s intricate network of water, sewer, gas, telecommunications, and electric infrastructure. NUCA is found online at www.nuca.com, and can be followed on Twitter at [@NUCA_National](https://twitter.com/NUCA_National). The association’s Twitter hashtags are #WeDigAmerica and #NUCADigs.