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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ABC SAYS CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE PROJECT IN JEOPARDY:
CONTRACTORS SAY ANTI-COMPETITIVE PROJECT LABOR AGREEMENT
WILL INCREASE COSTS, HURT LOCAL WORKERS**

(Syracuse) The Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) today charged that state and federal politicians along with representatives of Big Labor are jeopardizing the speedy and economical completion of the Champlain Bridge project. The bridge project could be stymied and taxpayers harmed by the insistence of Big Labor and their political allies in government that a project labor agreement (PLA) be required on the \$75 million bridge replacement project.

A PLA requires that virtually all labor working on the project be hired from the union hall. This special interest mandate effectively eliminates nonunion contractors and their employees, like those represented by ABC, from competing to win work on this project.

“Special interest PLAs result in increased costs and reduced competition,” said Rebecca Meinking, President of the Empire State Chapter of Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC). “PLAs deny taxpayers the accountability in public works projects they deserve from government.”

“We are disappointed that the New York Transportation Department, at the behest of Big Labor is considering use of a PLA on the Champlain Bridge project”, said Meinking. “This area of New York State, Essex and Washington Counties, and the State of Vermont are largely served by nonunion contractors. More than 70 percent of the construction workforce in this area of New York and 95 percent of Vermont’s construction workers do not belong to a construction labor union, according to government data. The use of a PLA will actually mean that the majority of local labor will be shut out of the opportunity to work on this bridge replacement project in a time when the unemployment rate in the construction industry is 24.7 percent nationwide, and even higher in the areas where this bridge project is located.”

“Hard-working taxpayers who are tired of special interest politics and tired of government waste must hold their elected officials accountable, particularly Congressmen Scott Murphy and Bill Owens, as well as Senators Schumer and Gillibrand, who have pushed this special interest PLA behind closed doors”, said Steve Fuller of Fuller Excavating out of Keeseville, NY.

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“Like the Global Foundries chipfab plant in Malta, a PLA on the Champlain Bridge project will guarantee that labor is imported from far away since there isn’t enough local union labor to meet the ambitious time schedule on the bridge,” said Ted Luck of Luck Brothers, Inc., a family-owned heavy highway contractor out of Plattsburg, NY. “Proponents say they want to insure local labor is working on the bridge when exactly the opposite will occur. Why should my employees at Luck Brothers be denied the right to participate in this project just because they are nonunion?”

“Employees and their families lose under PLAs,” said Jeff Luck, also of Luck Brothers, Inc. “Nonunion employees are required by PLAs to pay dues to a union and their existing benefit contributions from their employers are funneled into union pension and benefit funds even though nonunion employees will never receive any benefits as they aren’t members of a union. A PLA is a big windfall for Big Labor, and they are the ONLY beneficiaries of these kinds of agreements”.

“Public contracting should be about the best quality work at the best price – always,” said Meinking. “It is time to give this PLA the heave-ho and restore taxpayer accountability on the Champlain Bridge project by ending special interest kickbacks and ensuring an open, fair and competitive bidding process for all contractors and their local employees.”

About the Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc.

Associated Builders and Contractors is a national association representing nearly 25,000 construction general contractors, specialty contractors, suppliers and construction-related firms across the U.S. ABC promotes open competition and free enterprise in the U.S. construction industry where more than 7 million people are normally employed and another 2 million are self-employed. Construction makes a major contribution to the nation’s economy with more than \$1 trillion in construction projects put in place each year.

The Empire State Chapter of ABC, headquartered at 6369 Collamer Drive in East Syracuse, serves nearly 700 members throughout New York from its central office, and from branch offices in Albany, Buffalo, Rochester and Long Island/Metro NYC. For more information visit www.abc.org.