

Norton Releases New Suggestions from Roundtable Hearing on D.C. Hiring and Small Business Contracting and Her Opening Remarks

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton’s (D-DC) roundtable hearing last night on the hiring of D.C. residents and small businesses at downtown General Services Administration (GSA) and the Smithsonian Institution’s Museum of African American History and Culture construction projects drew a large crowd and new ideas to increase local hiring at construction sites downtown. Because most GSA job sites are scattered throughout the city, unlike the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) headquarters construction site in Ward 8, which has its own Opportunities Center for hiring, the GSA Deputy Regional Commissioner for the National Capital Region, Shapour Ebadi, agreed to consider posting construction job openings and upcoming business opportunities for the downtown GSA construction projects on a website, and to consider an “easily accessible site” where residents and businesses could learn of opportunities. The Smithsonian Institution’s Chief of Construction, Derek Ross, also agreed to consider posting openings online, where they already post small business opportunities.

Norton noted significant improvement in the hiring of D.C. residents by Whiting-Turner, the contractor rehabilitating the GSA headquarters, in August after a poor showing in July, but she said that this project had a special obligation to “lead by example,” given GSA’s jurisdiction over all federal construction projects. In her opening statement, she recalled that from the beginning, “we were clear that we did not intend to bring federal construction projects to a city suffering high unemployment, while our residents were relegated to the role of onlookers, rather than workers, in their community, where the construction is occurring.” The Congresswoman noted that while federal law bars requirements to hire from a particular group or geographic area, she would continue to make maximum use of the aggressive local outreach that the federal government allows and encourages and that has been successful at the DHS construction site in Ward 8. “We are ready to work with contractors and unions on these sites, but in return we will need them to work harder in taking seriously the outreach to our community for jobs on these sites,” she said.

The text of Norton’s opening statement follows.

Statement of Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton

Roundtable Hearing on D.C. Hiring and Small Business Contracting

August 21, 2012

This evening’s roundtable is one of several hearings and roundtables we have had since I chaired the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management, and was able to get unprecedented funding for General Service Administration (GSA) projects in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA or stimulus). Our purpose is to monitor this construction to ensure that funds that Congress provided specifically to spur employment do exactly that for the residents of the District of Columbia.

The District of Columbia received funding for the largest number of stimulus construction projects in the United States, because the city is dominated by federal buildings that have long been on the GSA list for rehabilitation and repair. In addition, we were able to get funds for the largest GSA construction project in the country, the Department of Homeland Security headquarters in Ward 8. Our prior hearings and roundtables focused on the DHS headquarters complex. However, the first building in the complex, the Coast Guard headquarters, is nearly complete. The full funding of the President’s fiscal year 2013 DHS headquarters request of \$89 million has the support of Congress, an indication that both the President and Congress are committed to completing the multi-building complex, but at a significantly slower rate than anticipated.

Today's roundtable turns to other stimulus-funded GSA projects, and to the Smithsonian Museum of African American History and Culture. Although not individually as important as the planned DHS headquarters complex, these projects, taken together, are equally important. In addition, we will hear testimony from the Smithsonian Museum of African American History and Culture Museum, which has begun construction. The same expectations we have had for the other federal projects, of course, apply equally to the new Smithsonian museum.

At the outset, we were clear that we did not intend to bring federal construction projects to a city suffering high unemployment, while our residents were relegated to the role of onlookers rather than workers in their community, where the construction is occurring. At the same time, no Member of Congress can require contractors to hire or unions to allow residents to work, and federal law and regulations do not permit a hiring advantage to the community where federal construction is occurring or numerical goals for hiring specific groups. I have therefore made maximum use of all the tools available to us under federal law. This roundtable is surely one of them because it allows the community to hear from residents and some of the major actors on federal projects here, in addition to D.C. residents who can testify about how they got their jobs, which can inform us and residents. Today's roundtable supplements other important systematic tools we regularly use for accountability, such as our monthly monitoring of federal construction here based on payroll data and unannounced visits to construction sites.

We indicated concerns with some of the hiring in our July report announcing today's roundtable. Yesterday, we released the most current D.C. hiring figures. Taken together, the figures show a modest improvement over the course of a single month. While the trajectory is heading in the right direction, the unevenness among contractors needs to be understood and explained. For example, many of the federal projects downtown are doing similar types of work in rehabilitating federal buildings to make them more energy efficient. Why, then, do some of the contractors employ as few as 5% D.C. workers while others show almost triple that number? In general, is there specific outreach to the community on these projects? At the DHS headquarters construction site, there is an Opportunities Center that provides a place known and visible to the community for residents and small businesses to come for work and training. With projects in a number of locations, contractors and unions would need to be strategic if they are serious about outreach.

We are not naïve. We do not expect these projects to absorb the many residents who are unemployed. We recognize that each job is different in size, place of work, and the skills needed at particular junctures. Moreover, my work as a civil rights lawyer and as chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission taught me that there must be a match between the skills and workers for a particular job. However, our experience at the DHS headquarters makes unacceptable the excuse that employers cannot find D.C. residents who can do the work. The District of Columbia is only 10% percent of the population of this region but hiring of D.C. journeymen and apprentices at the DHS headquarters construction site for the past two years has tended to be at 20% or above. We cannot and do not require specific numbers of D.C. residents to be hired at the sites under discussion tonight. But the DHS experience, where many levels and varieties of skills were required, gives us a realistic understanding of the skill levels of our residents. We are ready to work with contractors and unions but in return we will need them to work harder in taking seriously outreach to our community for jobs on these sites. We will hold all who receive contracts with federal funds accountable.

Published: August 22, 2012

http://norton.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3309&Itemid=88

Norton Roundtable Hearing Tonight on Hiring, Small Business Contracting to Feature Residents and Downtown Construction Sites in D.C.

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) will hold a roundtable hearing tonight, **Tuesday, August 21, 2012, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. in Rayburn House Office Building Room 2167**, featuring D.C. residents and small businesses working on federal construction sites in the District of Columbia. The hearing will examine the rate of hiring of D.C. residents and the use of D.C. small businesses on stimulus-funded federal construction projects underway in the District, which received more stimulus construction funds than any other U.S. city because of the large number of federal buildings in the nation’s capital in need of rehabilitation.

Tonight’s hearing will feature federal projects underway in downtown D.C., where contractors are hiring more workers as the pace of these projects picks up, as well as the construction of the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of African American History and Culture.

The first panel of witnesses will be D.C. residents representing various trades who work on federal construction projects in the city. They will be asked about their experiences getting work on these federal construction projects, the work they are currently doing on those sites, and other questions that can help guide other residents looking for similar work, and the Congresswoman as she monitors the hiring of residents.

The second panel will focus on the federal projects themselves, and will include Shapour Ebadi, General Services Administration (GSA) Deputy Regional Commissioner in the National Capital Region; Ron Eisenberg, Senior Vice President at Whiting-Turner, the general contractor at the GSA Headquarters building construction, and Adrienne Smoot, President of AV Smoot, the D.C. subcontractor for historic restoration work at the Hoover and Lafayette buildings.

The third panel will examine the work underway at the Smithsonian African American Museum of History and Culture and will include Derek Ross, Chief of Construction for the Smithsonian Institution; Mark Cain, President and CEO of Smoot Construction Company, representing the general contractor on the project; and Rose Shelton, President of Shelton Federal, a D.C. subcontractor on the project.

“Tonight’s roundtable hearing will give us a comprehensive look at the hiring of D.C. residents and the use of D.C. small businesses on federal construction projects throughout the city. The goals are to diagnose problems, eliminate barriers that may exist, and increase outreach across the city,” Norton said. “We are interested in finding ways to get our residents and small businesses hired, rather than criticism that is not remedy-oriented. It is unacceptable for D.C. residents and small businesses to be sitting on the sidelines as federal dollars meant to provide jobs flow to construction projects in their home town. The benchmarks from the ongoing Ward 8 Department of Homeland Security project at St. Elizabeths demonstrate that there are plenty of D.C. residents with the skills to be journeymen or apprentices for the work now underway across the city, and a number of D.C. small businesses that are well-qualified to serve as subcontractors on those projects.”

Norton held hearings on federal construction when she chaired the subcommittee with jurisdiction over the GSA, and has held similar roundtable hearings as ranking member of that subcommittee, that focused on the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) headquarters construction, the largest federal construction project in the country. With construction of the first building in that complex, the Coast Guard headquarters, nearly complete, and the project slowed due to a slowdown in appropriations, tonight’s hearing will focus on other federal projects in the city, which Norton said, taken together, are just as important as the planned mammoth DHS complex.

As a former chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Norton helped develop state-of-the-art

techniques approved by federal courts to increase the hiring of minorities and women by businesses.

Federal construction contracts cannot require contractors to hire particular groups or hire from a particular geographic area, but the federal government encourages the aggressive local outreach that Norton has been doing, and GSA takes into account the level at which each company has engaged the local community when that firm competes for future federal construction contracts.

Published: August 21, 2012

http://norton.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3308&Itemid=88

Norton Releases New Hiring Statistics Ahead of Roundtable Hearing Tuesday

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Office of Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) today released new comprehensive statistics on the hiring of District of Columbia residents on federal construction projects underway in the city. Norton was responsible for getting the funds for the General Services Administration (GSA) projects in her role as chair, and now ranking member, of the subcommittee with jurisdiction over GSA. The figures, which Norton says show a slight overall improvement in hiring D.C. residents, will be a key part of the Congresswoman's roundtable hearing on **Tuesday, August 21** at the **Rayburn House Office Building Room 2167** from **6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.**, which will provide a basis for evaluating the hiring of D.C. residents and use of D.C. small businesses at the various General Services Administration (GSA) projects, as well as at the Smithsonian Museum of African American History and Culture project. Contractors, D.C. business owners, and residents will take part in Tuesday's roundtable. Federal construction contracts cannot require hiring from a particular geographic area, but the federal government encourages the aggressive local outreach that Norton has been doing, and GSA will take into account how well each company has engaged the local community when the company competes for future federal construction work.

The statistics to date, which are based on payrolls, of D.C. residents working at the largest ongoing GSA project in the District, the St. Elizabeths Department of Homeland Security headquarters project in Ward 8, show: Clark Construction, U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters building, 413 of 1986 or 21% (21% last month); Balfour Beatty Construction, security perimeter fence, 12 of the 312 or 4% (5% last month); **Grunley Construction, adaptive reuse, 48 of the 565 or 8% (2% last month)**; and the first monthly report from General Dynamics, which has the information technology infrastructure contract for the campus and recently began work, shows 10 of the 97 or 10% of workers are D.C. residents. There has been little change in the percentage of D.C. residents hired on the St. Elizabeths project in recent months, because congressional appropriations have significantly slowed. Still, Clark Construction has continued to employ above 20%, a consistently higher percentage of D.C. workers, while Balfour Beatty and Grunley, working on the same site, have lagged far behind. Norton will meet with the contractors and unions involved. D.C. residents are 10% of the regional hiring population for most construction jobs. However, the St. Elizabeths site, which has used many crafts, has set a benchmark of over 20% that allows Norton's office to gauge the available qualified pool of labor for other projects.

The statistics to date on D.C. residents working on other federal projects in the city are as follows: Whiting-Turner, GSA headquarters building, 52 out of 754 or 8% (5% last month); Gilbane-Grunley, the Hoover building, 92 out of 904 or 10% (10% last month); Turtle Associates, the Roosevelt building, 7 out of 80 or 9% (14% last month); Turtle Associates, the Ronald Reagan building, 8 out of 44 or 18% (50% last month); Marada Contracting-DS East, the Markey National Courts building, 5 out of 40 or 13% (13% last month); **Grunley Construction, the Lafayette building, 27 out of 523 or 5% (5% last month)**; Teng Construction, the Cohen building, 0 out of 14 or 0% (0% last month); DS East Joint Venture, the Environmental Protection Agency

building, one out of 17 or 6% (6% last month); and Marada Contracting, the Housing and Urban Development headquarters building, 8 out of 61 or 13% (13% last month). These statistics represent a 2% overall increase in hiring of D.C. residents compared to July's statistics, with most improving, but some still lagging.

At the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, 30 out of the 217 or 14% of workers are D.C. residents. This project is in the pre-construction and excavation stages, a period when there is typically a significant pool of well-qualified D.C. workers. Norton said, "Since the protest by the Laborers International Union of North America last month, the percentage of D.C. residents on the project has increased from 8% to 14%. This progress shows an improvement and a good faith effort as the project is starting up. However, the goal of our monthly reports, visits to sites, and meetings with contractors is to ensure that the agencies continue to improve and sustain D.C. employment on projects," Norton said. "We will continue to look at many factors, including what crafts are being used, when the work began, what outreach efforts companies have used, and whether the contractor and union have improved or sustained the hiring of D.C. residents. We have been gathering witnesses for tomorrow's roundtable since June, because it is important for the community to hear directly from people on the site, but the hearing is only one tool available to us to ensure and help employers and unions hire where they work."

The Congresswoman's office also reported that current D.C. small business results are still coming in. They will be discussed at the hearing, and will be reported on a monthly basis.

Published: August 20, 2012

http://norton.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3307&Itemid=88

Norton Releases Witness List for Upcoming Roundtable Hearing on Federal Construction Hiring

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Office of Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) today released the list of witnesses who will appear at her roundtable hearing on hiring at federal construction projects in the District on **Tuesday, August 21** at **Rayburn House Office Building Room 2167** from **6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.** Norton scheduled this hearing after reviewing a monthly report revealing that a disappointing number of D.C. residents were being hired at a number of federal construction sites in the city.

At her roundtable hearing, Norton will hear from Shapour Ebadi, the General Services Administration (GSA) Deputy Regional Commissioner in the National Capital Region; Derek Ross, Chief of Construction for the Smithsonian Institution; representatives from two minority woman-owned D.C. businesses, AV Smoot and Shelton Federal Group; a representative from Whiting-Turner, the general contractor for the GSA project at 1800 F Street NW; and D.C. residents who work at some of the sites, who will speak about their experiences in obtaining employment and working at their respective sites.

"My office continues to keep a close watch, monitoring the hiring of D.C. residents and the contracting of D.C. businesses for large federal construction projects in the District. Work on the largest project, the Coast Guard Headquarters building, the first of several buildings slated for the new Department of Homeland Security (DHS) headquarters at St Elizabeths in Ward 8, is finishing up, and the design process for the DHS Secretary's office in the historic center building is underway," Norton said. "Meanwhile, we continue to focus on other projects, particularly considering that D.C. has more of them than other jurisdictions because of the focus of the stimulus

funds on repairing federal buildings. This roundtable hearing will give us a comprehensive view of the status of hiring and small business contracting on large federal projects now underway in D.C, and where the hiring shortfall is. We want to diagnose the problems and barriers in order to solve them, not simply to criticize the results. For example, the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture is in its start-up phase. Other projects have been underway for longer periods of time. The success D.C. had with hiring and small business contracting at the Coast Guard headquarters building shows us that there are plenty of residents with the requisite skills, as well as small businesses in our city, to get good results at the federal sites here.”

Hiring for federal projects cannot be based on location, race, or similar categories, but the federal government encourages aggressive outreach to the communities where projects are under construction. Norton has used this authority to good effect at the St. Elizabeths site and is measuring other sites using proven benchmarks from the St. Elizabeths site.

Published: August 14, 2012

http://norton.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3300:norton-releases-witness-list-for-upcoming-roundtable-hearing-on-federal-construction-hiring&catid=2&Itemid=88

Norton to hold Roundtable Hearing on Federal Construction Hiring After Reviewing Latest Disappointing D.C. Stats

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The Office of Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) today announced a Roundtable Hearing on **Tuesday, August 21** at the **Rayburn House Office Building Room 2167** from **6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.**, following results of a disappointing monthly report on federal construction projects underway in the District of Columbia. Norton’s office also released the cumulative statistics on the number of D.C. residents working on nine General Services Administration (GSA) construction projects of various sizes now underway throughout the city, and, separately, the number of D.C. residents employed by the four general contractors working on the Department of Homeland Security consolidated headquarters construction project at the old St. Elizabeths West Campus, and the first hiring report from the Smithsonian Museum of African American History and Culture, which started construction recently. Norton will question witnesses on local hiring and small business outreach on the various GSA projects and on the Smithsonian Museum of African American History and Culture project. The roundtable will feature contractors, workers, and small business owners.

The statistics to date on D.C. residents working on the St. Elizabeths Department of Homeland Security project are as follows: Clark Construction, U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters building, 407 of 1913 or 21% of workers are D.C. residents; Washington Gas-Honeywell, central utility heating plant, 31 of 145 or 21 % of workers are D.C. residents; Balfour Beatty Construction, security perimeter fence, 12 of the 239 or 5% of workers are D.C. residents; Balfour Beatty Construction, site utilities, six of the 237 or 2% of workers are D.C. residents; and **Grunley Construction, adaptive reuse, 42 of the 515 or 8% of workers are D.C. residents.** Norton noted the low number of D.C. residents involved in the work being performed by Balfour Beatty Construction and Washington Gas-Honeywell. This work is substantially complete, with little new hiring taking place. However, when these and other companies compete for federal construction contracts in the future, GSA will take into account how well they have engaged the communities.

The statistics to date on D.C. residents working on other federal projects in the District are as

follows: Whiting-Turner, GSA headquarters building, 40 out of 738 or 5% of workers are D.C. residents; Gilbane-Grunley, the Hoover building, 72 out of 731 or 10% of workers are D.C. residents; Turtle Associates, the Roosevelt building, five out of 36 or 14% of workers are D.C. residents; Turtle Associates, the Ronald Reagan building, five out of 10 or 50% of workers are D.C. residents; Marada Contracting-DS East, the Markey National Courts building, 5 out of 40 or 13% of workers are D.C. residents; Grunley Construction, the Lafayette building, 27 out of 512 or 5% of workers are D.C. residents; Teng Construction, the Cohen building, 0 out of 14 or 0% of workers are D.C. residents; DS East Joint Venture, the Environmental Protection Agency headquarters building, one out of 17 or 6% of workers are D.C. residents; and Marada Contracting, the Weaver Housing and Urban Development headquarters building, eight out of 61 or 13% of workers are D.C. residents.

At the National Museum of American History and Culture, 10 of the 79 or 8% of workers to date have been D.C. residents during the pre-construction and excavation stages, when typically there is a well-qualified pool of D.C. residents.

Norton said, “We recognize that the varying percentages of D.C. workers on these projects do not tell the entire story. We must look at when the projects began, where the contractors are in their construction cycles, their outreach efforts have been, what crafts are being utilized, and many other relevant factors. But many of these contractors have not been paying the necessary attention to the effort it will take to employ D.C. residents for construction jobs in the city where they live. Initially, with the construction project at the DHS headquarters, Clark Construction helped our office set expectations and calculate the potentially available and trained pool of D.C. residents for various crafts and apprentices. Norton said, “Federal projects may not hire by location, race, or other similar categories, but the federal government encourages aggressive outreach to communities where federal construction is occurring. We stand willing and ready to be of assistance to contractors and subcontractors and have already met with them. However, it is not acceptable for contractors and subcontractors to bring workers to a new job in the District of Columbia without also making a strong good faith effort to employ local labor.”

Norton is the ranking Democrat on the Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management, which has jurisdiction over GSA, including federal construction sites.

Published: August 8, 2012

http://www.norton.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3297&Itemid=88