

Norton Announces Three Project Labor Agreements That Will Ensure Employment of D.C. Residents

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WASHINGTON, DC -- Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) today said that she expected the General Services Administration (GSA) award of three Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) on federal projects in the District of Columbia to enhance her efforts to ensure the employment of D.C. residents on the projects. The projects are awards to green, modernize, and refurbish the GSA Central Office at \$160 million, the Lafayette building at \$129 million, and six historic buildings on the St. Elizabeths West campus for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) headquarters at \$57 million. Norton, who has jurisdiction over the GSA as chair of the House Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management, has pushed for PLAs on federal projects because of their special advantage to taxpayers of on-time completion by skillfully trained workers at a predictable cost and for the hiring of local residents who can be hired on future projects.

PLAs are collective bargaining agreements with one or more labor organizations used by local, state and federal jurisdictions to facilitate large-scale construction projects. Unionized construction employers have an advantage over non-unionized construction employers, which generally do not have a permanent workforce, presenting challenges on ensuring a steady supply of highly skilled workers who meet timelines without cost overruns. PLAs also eliminate the confusion and uncertainty about the terms and conditions of employment among subcontractors working on the same project. Important for a large federal project, PLAs specify the wages and other benefits to be paid to workers on a project, prescribe procedures for resolving labor disputes, and include no strike and no lock out clauses. Especially critical to Norton's goal of jobs for D.C. residents, union dues of each member will be placed into a training trust fund for unskilled workers. These workers are then eligible to join the union and work on any union job, not only that PLA project. Although hiring on a federal project cannot be restricted to a local jurisdiction, Norton has taken advantage of outreach regulations and provisions that do encourage hiring of local residents. Even in the start-up phase of the DHS headquarters construction, more than a third of apprentices have been D.C. residents. On February 6, 2009, President Obama issued an Executive Order encouraging federal agencies to consider using PLAs on federal projects of \$25 million or more to promote efficiency and predictability on complex and long-term projects.

Norton said, "Stimulus funds have given GSA the largest and most complicated projects in the history of the agency. GSA is being held to a no excuses standard to get the job done on-time, cost effectively, and efficiently. PLAs have a record of meeting this standard and of meeting the goal I have set for significant employment of D.C. residents."

http://www.norton.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1875&Itemid=6