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SMART and SMACNA Work Together to Have Critical Bills Passed into Law

From fire life safety to upgrading HVAC systems in public buildings, SMART and SMACNA have a record of success in joint lobbying.

Fire life safety bills have been signed into law—potentially saving lives.

Billions of dollars in federal money have been allocated to upgrade HVAC systems at public schools nationwide—making classroom air safer for students.

Those are just two issues where the combined lobbying efforts of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, and Transportation Workers (SMART) and the Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors' National Association (SMACNA) led to the passage of legislation.

Stanley E. Kolbe Jr., SMACNA's executive director of government and political affairs, says the organizations have worked closely on several critical federal issues, including apprenticeship training standards, infrastructure funding, and updates to the *Davis-Bacon Act*.

"There's an old expression," Kolbe says. "'Together, we do it better.' I really appreciate that SMACNA and SMART have common views on many of these issues."

Greg Blose, business manager at SMART Local 12 in Pittsburgh, says the union worked with SMACNA of Western Pennsylvania to secure passage of a fire life safety ordinance. Both groups met with city officials to educate them about the importance of using certified experts to inspect fire and smoke dampers.

They also co-wrote grant applications to secure funds to build fire simulation room to show city council members just how quickly a fire can spread through an HVAC system.

The combined lobbying made a difference, Blose says.

"Politicians like to see that a project is a joint effort between the union and the contractor," he says. "Several we've presented to remarked that our partnership was key."

Like many skilled construction trades, the sheet metal and HVAC industry faces a looming employee shortage as longtime workers retire.

Both groups support legislation that could bring more projects to union construction and help make careers in trades more attractive to the future workforce.

The *Inflation Reduction Act*, signed by President Joe Biden in 2022, “is just loaded with hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars in tax incentives for high-efficiency and high indoor air quality standards work,” Kolbe says.

Tiffany Finck-Haynes, a SMART government affairs representative, says she’s been educating developers on the generous tax breaks that projects can get if they use SMACNA contractors.

“And it’s been working,” she says. “SMART workers are involved in eligible HVAC construction and duct fabrication projects around the country, including electric vehicle battery facilities in Ohio, Tennessee, Georgia, and all over the country.”

Finck-Haynes says that when labor and management are on the same side of an issue, lawmakers notice. “I think it's very helpful when we can show labor and management are coming together, and advocating for the same policy,” she says. “It just helps us in showing that we have a united front.”

Karen Fox, president of Precision Air Balance Co. Inc., in Anaheim, California, and SMACNA’s 2022 Legislative Contractor of the Year, agrees. “We are in this together,” Fox says. “So, whatever it takes to get legislation passed, we need to work together.”

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The International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, and Transportation Workers (SMART) and the Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors’ National Association (SMACNA) have a labor-management partnership that is more than 75 years old. The goal of these Partners in Progress is to maintain an effective cooperative effort that demonstrates their expertise in the heating ventilating and air conditioning, architectural metal, and industrial sheet metal markets. For additional information, visit pinp.org.