

THE CHAIRMAN'S CORNER



A monthly column to inform ABC members about national and local issues impacting Maine's construction industry.

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ABC's 2010 Chairman - Doug Newman of Newman Concrete Services in Richmond.

As ABC Maine celebrates its 25th anniversary, it is the perfect opportunity to reflect on our history, give some thought to what brings us together and recommit ourselves to the hard work that remains.

The first ABC chapter was founded 60 years ago in Baltimore by seven contractors who were prevented from bidding on work by the union's

stranglehold on the construction industry. The times were different and these men were risking a great deal by standing up to organized labor and their allies in city hall and Baltimore's back rooms. Their belief in free enterprise and the value of rewarding individuals on the basis of merit rather patronage gave them the courage to take on the system.

ABC has come a long way since that day in Baltimore, and we have taken on many new challenges, but the values that brought those seven men together are the same values that over 25,000 ABC members still fight for today.

Those that founded our chapter recognized the importance of their mission and committed themselves to bringing Maine's construction industry together under the ABC banner. For this we owe them—and all those who came before us—a debt of gratitude.

What we are really celebrating is 25 years of commitment by ABC members and staff to the values for which ABC stands. 25 years of our members writing a check in January when they didn't know whether they would have enough work to pay all the bills come December. 25 years of members taking time away from their lives, their families and their businesses to support ABC, our industry and our communities

Whether it's providing an opportunity for fellowship and networking at our membership events or training our workers to give them the skills to succeed and make our companies safer, ABC members have given generously of their time and money. Whether it's supporting career technical education to ensure America has the workforce to build our nation's future or our passionate defense of free enterprise, ABC members are dedicated and engaged.

Of all the things that bring us together, ABC members are bound by a deeply held belief that free enterprise is the

force that makes our country great. We might use different words to describe what free enterprise means, but to most it's the belief that our nation is at its best when people are encouraged to take risks, make sacrifices and work hard in pursuit of their own definition of success.

We believe that even those who come up short are better off than they would be if we dragged everyone down to some common level of mediocrity. Just as importantly, those that fail to reach their goals have the incentive and the opportunity to try again and avoid the trap of dependency and entitlement.

We believe that private markets work better than government regulations to reward responsible behavior and punish those who are not. Government should limit its

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intrusion into free markets to only that necessary to protect basic public interests. Government should set the stage for free and fair competition, not pick winners and losers.

We believe that individuals should be free to negotiate the terms of their employment one on one with their employer. Individuals are empowered by their ability to take their services elsewhere if they find the terms of their employment unacceptable. Individuals should not be forced into collective agreements that put their interests behind those of others.

We believe these are the values that have made this country great and we become more concerned with every step our nation takes away from them. So, for 25 years, ABC members in Maine have fought back against those who attempt to diminish free enterprise. ABC is different from other business groups in that we are united around these principles. More importantly we are guided by them – even when they conflict with our own short term interests. This is what has made ABC special for the last 25 years and will ensure that we stay that way for the next 25.

As we look back at where we came from, let's keep in mind the challenges ahead. Let's commit to taking our defense of free enterprise to our school boards, our town halls, our Legislature, the Blaine House—and to the voting booth. Not because it benefits us today, but because it is imperative if the next 25 years are going to be as great as the last.

**Doug Newman, Chairman - ABC Board of Directors
Newman Concrete Services, Inc.**