

PHCC Solutions

HOW COALITIONS HELP STRENGTHEN PHCC ADVOCACY EFFORTS

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE PLUMBING-HEATING-COOLING CONTRACTORS—NATIONAL ASSOCIATION | VOLUME 3, ISSUE 3

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Advocating for You & Your Business



Apprenticeship Ratios: What's the Right Answer?

Fighting Back Against Unfair Utility Competition

California's Approach to Advocacy



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20



FEATURES

12 Industry Spotlight

How Coalitions Help Strengthen PHCC Advocacy Efforts

16 The Power of One

Advocating on Behalf of the P-H-C Industry, These Members Prove That Even a Single Voice Can Make a Difference

20 Apprenticeship Ratios

Advocating for Change to Meet Demand

24 Leveling the Playing Field

Public Utility Companies Benefit From Built-in Customer Base, Name Recognition and Ratepayer Subsidies

33 A Quick Look at Key PHCC Issues

DEPARTMENTS

6 President's Message

When a Voice Turns Into Action

9 EVP Message

Calling for Action

10 Editor's Note

Storytelling at Its Best

15 PHCC Member Benefits

PHCC Protects Your Business

29 Legislative Report

Fighting for Policy Changes That Benefit You

31 Regulatory Report

PHCC Continues to Pursue an Association Health Plan to Help Members

35 Foundation Source

Leading the Way on Getting Apprenticeship Curriculum in Local Schools

39 Chapter Excellence

Advocacy Efforts in California Expand With Collaborative Approach

40 Calendar of Events

42 Index of Advertisers



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WHEN A VOICE TURNS INTO ACTION

BY KEN NIELSEN
PHCC—NATIONAL ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT

Sometimes it takes a village – or at least a strong contingent of passionate contractors – to create change. I've been attending the PHCC—National Association Legislative Conference for many years, along with a group from Massachusetts that's so large that we usually have to break up into two groups to meet with all the representatives from our state! That always ensures that we can leverage the full potential of this great event, sharing our stories about important issues – like unfair utility competition and the need for infrastructure spending – with all our national lawmakers and staffs so that they have our industry's issues top of mind when they're making decisions that impact our businesses.

By voicing our concerns in person about unfair utility competition, we hopefully put a face – and a story – with this important issue. This year I spoke first-hand about how, years ago, a gas company in Massachusetts was giving away free equipment, with consumers having to find a contractor to install it. As a contractor, I can't compete with free equipment, and most contractors aren't interested in installing it. I am hoping my representatives heard my voice loud and clear about how these utilities have an unfair advantage by procuring resources subsidized by ratepayers.

Rolling Up Our Sleeves Locally

The national Legislative Conference has provided a fabulous framework for our PHCC of Massachusetts' Day at the State Capital. Our chapter's executive director, Wayne Thomas, did a great job developing this annual state event a few years ago and always has a small but mighty group of local members getting in front of our local representatives. Hopefully you are just as passionate about the laws in your state that affect your business; I encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities to advocate in person on important issues. As we've found in Massachusetts, often those in the state legislature have more time to meet with you (and they usually remember you from year to year!). That repetition is key.

I'm pleased to report that I'm seeing signs of infrastructure improvement spending right now in my hometown of Reading, Massachusetts, where they're replacing both old cast iron gas pipes *and* the water main. Hopefully this trend will spread across

America as Congress realizes that it's not just our visible bridges and roadways that are in disrepair; our infrastructure *below* ground (namely water and gas) is in dire straits as well!

Setting the Direction on Key Issues

Since I've become a national PHCC officer, I've been exposed to how much time and effort the PHCC Government Relations Committee spends developing and reviewing positions on key PHCC issues. We are very lucky to have such dedicated committee members – contractors just like you – who help set the direction of messages for PHCC staff to carry to Capitol Hill and to regulatory agencies. One issue I brought up to this committee was the National Fire Protection Association Hot Work Certification, which resulted from fallen Boston firefighters' families' push for a "Hot Work" bill. (The firefighters died in a 2014 fire that was sparked by welders igniting a torch on a day with intense winds.)

As of July 2018, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts made hot work certification mandatory for all workers performing work involving flames or producing heat. Via the Education section of our PHCC of Massachusetts website (phccma.org), visitors can register for the Hot Work Safety Certificate Program. I predict this will be a nationwide initiative in the next few years, and I want PHCC to be the place to go to get this certification no matter where you reside.

Training on New Regulations

As an HVAC contractor, I am also very passionate about the changing regulations on refrigerants. With some of the new refrigerants being mildly flammable, it's more important than ever to ensure our technicians are trained on safe handling. I just attended a joint meeting in April with the Refrigeration Service Engineers Society (RSES); together we participated in a training session by refrigerant manufacturer Chemours. I'm pleased that both RSES and Chemours are joining us for CONNECT 2019, Oct. 2-4, in Indianapolis, Indiana. In fact, Chemours is sponsoring a site visit for attendees at their facility in Indy. I hope to see you there! ●

PHCC—National Association President Ken Nielsen also is president of AccuAire, Inc., in Reading, Massachusetts.



CALLING FOR ACTION

BY MICHAEL COPP
PHCC EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

The PHCC Federation represents (as described back in 1883) a membership of “allied contractors” engaged in a “movement” dedicated to the “advancement and education of the plumbing and HVACR industry for the health, safety and comfort of society and the protection of the environment.” This movement requires engagement at the local, state and national level to ensure that members mobilize in lock-step when our industry is being attacked either by faulty and wasteful legislative or regulatory requirements. Advocacy is the primary way that the PHCC Federation advances critical issues that keep members up at night and influences legislative and regulatory efforts with a call for action.

In a recent survey, PHCC members ranked “legislative and regulatory leadership/representation” as a critical driver of membership in the association. As one member says in an interview: “If we have a problem and we want to see laws changed, we have a say and that’s awesome.” We are delighted to hear comments like that because they indicate PHCC is providing exactly the type of representation that the PHCC founders envisioned so many years ago.

In 2019, major PHCC advocacy issues include unfair utility competition, Association Health Plans and infrastructure spending. I was pleased to be part of a PHCC delegation at the 2019 Legislative Conference that talked directly with national lawmakers about our organization’s positions on these crucial issues. During this annual conference and other visits on Capitol Hill throughout the years, I have seen firsthand that these elected officials *do* listen to us.

In addition to the priority issues at this year’s Legislative Conference, other areas of focus directly affecting our members over the past several years include:

- Department of Labor’s Task Force on Apprenticeship Expansion
- \$1.2 billion Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act
- Support for 529 savings plan being opened to technical education
- Gas Furnace Efficiency Version 2 proposal from AHRI to consolidate multiple component standards to a single furnace standard

“There is power and influence in numbers, and the bigger the PHCC organization grows, the more meaningful our movement becomes.”

- Rulemaking process for VRF HVAC products
- National Association Health Plan
- Immigration reform
- Waters of the U.S. rulemaking (WOTUS)
- Reauthorization of the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA)
- Reauthorization and making permanent the appropriation for WaterSense
- Lead paint renovation rules
- EnergyStar funding and EPA oversight
- Tax reform
- Permanent, full expensing of all business expenses (179D)
- Affordable Care Act Individual Mandate to \$0
- Elimination of Alternative Minimum Tax

A U.K. campaigner, Saira O’Mallie, remarked, “If you ever feel like you’re just one person trying to change something, I promise there are hundreds, thousands, if not millions of people out there who feel the same way as you, who want to make a difference.” There is power and influence in numbers, and the bigger the PHCC organization grows, the more meaningful our movement becomes. We encourage members like you to “tell your story” and call for action that protects this great industry. ●

Michael Copp, MA, MIRM, is Executive Vice President of PHCC—National Association. A respected leader among construction industry trade association executives, Copp and his team work to ensure that PHCC contractors are the best choice for professionalism, reliable products and knowledgeable service.



STORYTELLING AT ITS BEST

BY CHARLOTTE R. PERHAM

PHCC EDITOR AND VICE PRESIDENT OF COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING

We've all been shaped by stories. Whether they've come from family and friends, colleagues and mentors, educators and politicians, we've been influenced – many times – by someone's thoughts, issues and experiences. Sometimes they've inspired us to follow a similar path; other times they've given us pause.

And we all have our *own* stories ... ones built on experiences ... ones we can leverage to motivate and guide others.

For PHCC members, those heartfelt stories are the most effective instruments in our advocacy toolkit. When you talk from experience about how a situation has impacted your businesses, your families, your employees, your customers and your communities ... your legislative and regulatory leaders listen, and often respond. That's exactly what happened at PHCC's Legislative Conference in May, when more than 110 members shared their stories on unfair utility competition, infrastructure spending, Association Health Plans and more.

Purpose-Driven Stories

In this issue, your fellow contractors are sharing stories of their personal advocacy efforts. We hear the passion in PHCC President Ken Nielsen's voice as explains how he couldn't compete with the "free equipment" a gas company was giving away in his state of Massachusetts. And you'll learn that Dave Feddon from Florida is another contractor taking the unfair utility competition fight to the national level. He's hoping that if our national lawmakers start talking about it, the issue will get "feedback further down the legislative chain."

Like many of us who were shaped by our parents, Ronald Schmitt of Ohio admits that educating lawmakers comes "naturally." He was influenced by his father, who was very involved in government affairs and in state licensing for commercial contractors, as well as with code issues. He urges his fellow contractors to follow suit. "[Lobbyists and association staff] can

get the meetings with lawmakers scheduled, but PHCC *members* need to talk to the representatives."

Joe Cornetta of New York confesses that his passion for representing the interests of the industry does, indeed, take away from time with his family, his business and other interests, but "I make time because it's important," he says. Within these pages, he offers some sage advice on approaching legislators with information and ideas that are "professional, not political."

We also hear from PHCC members in Connecticut, Iowa and Texas who are advocating for apprenticeship ratios that meet current needs. Learn how they are working in their states to establish ratios that fulfill our industry's workforce demands and ensure a safe working environment.

Become inspired by PHCC of California, which is taking a *collaborative* approach to advocacy. Their members illustrate the power of strength in numbers by working with a part-time lobbyist and with other like-minded associations to take action in their state. "It is absolutely critical to look beyond our own association and partner with other organizations to share ideas and resources and to speak with one voice," says the chapter's John Stevenson.

Speaking From Experience

There's no denying that storytelling is at its best when it is backed by personal experience and has purpose. The stories within these pages all have that in common. They're from people just like you who have lived the lessons they're sharing and are making a difference – both as individuals and as part of a powerful network.

I hope they inspire you to *continue* the story. ●

Charlotte R. Perham is Vice President of Communications & Marketing for PHCC–National Association. She specializes in strategic communications of news, trends and events in the construction industry.

"There's no denying that storytelling is at its best when it is backed by personal experience and has purpose. The stories within these pages all have that in common. They're from people just like you who have lived the lessons they're sharing and are making a difference – both as individuals and as part of a powerful network."

HOW COALITIONS HELP STRENGTHEN PHCC ADVOCACY EFFORTS

When advocating on your behalf in Washington, D.C., there is strength in numbers. That's why PHCC—National Association works closely with several industry coalitions and organizations to increase our visibility and influence, elevating the possibility of positive results that will help you strengthen your business.

Recently, involvement with these partnerships has helped us secure many victories for the p-h-c industry that safeguard your interests, prevent overregulation and reinforce standards that protect public health and safety. (See page 15 for examples of those activities and accomplishments.)

Here is a quick look at some of the major coalitions we support:

Alliance for Water Efficiency (AWE)

Advocates for water-efficient products and programs.

Congressional Career and Technical Education Caucus

Supports and promotes career and technical education.

High Performance Buildings Coalition

Promotes innovative building technologies, enhances U.S. economic competitiveness, increases energy and water efficiency, and supports the development of private sector standards.

HVACR Industry Alliance

Presents a unified voice of the North American HVACR industry on matters of importance and in seeking consensus positions whenever possible.

Plumbing Efficiency Research Coalition (PERC)

Advances plumbing research initiatives pertaining to water efficiency and conducts applied research to determine best design and maintenance practices for the safe use of water in buildings.

Plumbing Industry Leadership Coalition (PILC)

Provides a policy forum for plumbing industry associations to seek common ground on plumbing industry issues and then addresses those issues as a unified coalition.

Unfair Utility Competition Task Group

Specifically addresses how PHCC and the industry can fight unfair competition from utility companies.



PHCC and other plumbing industry groups convened for the annual Plumbing Industry Leadership Coalition meeting in Washington, D.C., on May 21 to discuss the industry's policy priorities such as infrastructure funding and workforce issues.

Workforce Development Coalition

Comprises 30 trade associations and organizations to address and advocate for workforce challenges through roundtables, summits on Capitol Hill and outreach to lawmakers.

To strengthen our impact even more, we stay in touch with our industry partners, like PHCC's Corporate Partners, to see what issues they are watching and determine ways we can work together where it makes sense. They can be very strong allies for PHCC on shared issues, like workforce development and professionalism.

We also rely on PHCC members – *our strongest advocacy partner* – to get involved. Keep an eye out for our regular PHCC Advocate emails and legislative alerts ... and contact your elected officials on important grassroots campaigns. We need you to make our voice even stronger!

If you have any questions about PHCC's advocacy efforts, please email government@naphcc.org or call 800-533-7694. ●

PHCC PROTECTS YOUR BUSINESS



When you're working on your business, you don't have time to focus on industry wide challenges, yet changes in legislation can have a dramatic impact on your operations and your bottom line. That's where PHCC comes in, advocating on your behalf on federal, state and local issues and keeping you informed!

Here's what we're doing to have your back ... and how *you* can take our efforts to the next level:

Legislative and Regulatory Leadership

We talk, and our national lawmakers and regulatory agencies listen, resulting in recent action on key issues affecting p-h-c contractors, such as:

- Passage of the \$1.2 billion Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act in 2018, providing increased funding for skilled trades.
- Implementation of the 2019 tax reform package that:
 - Lowered corporate and individual tax rates
 - Increased the threshold of the estate tax
 - Increased expensed capital purchases
- Reduction in overly burdensome regulations through an executive order removing two existing regulatory actions for every new regulation created.
- Reauthorization of the Water Infrastructure Finance & Innovation Act (WIFIA), opening up possible contractor business opportunities with municipal water distribution and wastewater systems.
- Revised definition of Waters of the U.S. rule that limits the extent of federal oversight over development of private property – including water and conveyances – across the country.

- Issuance of a U.S. Department of Energy Process Rule to improve the agency's process for setting HVAC energy efficiency standards and test procedures for residential appliances and commercial equipment.
- Introduction of S.1170, which gives small businesses expanded access and eligibility to participate in Association Health Plans, a multi-employer option to provide affordable health care for employees.

Reinforcement of Industry Standards That Protect Public Health and Safety

PHCC never stops advocating on measures that safeguard us all, particularly through our representation on and contributions to important code bodies that support:

- Legionella prevention.
- Development of a Water Efficiency and Sanitation Standard (WE•Stand).
- Scald prevention through education on proper water heater installation.
- Code adoption of quality installation standards for HVAC equipment.
- UL Standard 60335-2-40 for air conditioning and heat pump products with sections regulating A2L refrigerants.

Regular Alerts on Laws, Regulations & Code Changes

When changes come around, be the first to know so you can prepare, plan and adapt.

PHCC's monthly PHCC Advocate keeps you informed on all the latest legislative, regulatory and code news.

State Legislative & Regulatory Tracking Tool

Want to track and monitor activity *in your region*? This easy tool (phccweb.org/policy-advocacy/phcc-legislative-regulatory-tracking-center/) gives you a quick glimpse of local bills and regulations (such as licensing, workforce development, small business and more) that impact your business, your employees and your family.

Action Center

Take a moment to contact your elected officials on important issues through our easy-to-use letter-writing service at <https://phcc.mmp2.org/engage>. ●

Help Us Maintain the Momentum... We need YOU at the Legislative Conference

Of course, PHCC'S annual Legislative Conference is our best opportunity to convince lawmakers that their decisions impact our members' businesses ... *but we can't carry a unified message without your voice and your story!* Make plans now to join us May 26-27, 2020 for next year's PHCC Legislative Conference on Capitol Hill as we address key issues affecting p-h-c businesses.

THE POWER OF ONE

ADVOCATING ON BEHALF OF THE P-H-C INDUSTRY, THESE MEMBERS PROVE THAT EVEN A SINGLE VOICE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE



Joe Cornetta (left) and Ronald Schmitt (right).

BY SHERYL S. JACKSON

Education and advocacy have been coursing through the veins of PHCC—National Association since its beginning. And while education efforts typically focus on advancing the skills of those working *within* our industry, it's just as important to inform those making decisions that *impact* our industry.

Educating lawmakers is where advocacy begins ... and there's no denying the power of *even a single voice*, especially when it's the voice of someone in the trenches like our very own member contractors. Ronald Schmitt, vice president of Joe Schmitt & Sons Plumbing, past president of PHCC of Ohio, and the Zone 1, District 3 representative for PHCC—National, urges every member to get involved in government relations committees and advocacy events such as state and national legislative days.

"Legislators and their staff members don't know if or how one bill affects other groups, so PHCC members can educate them about the positive and negative effect on our members," says Schmitt. Identifying potential consequences – including unintended consequences – on plumbers, heating and air contractors and similar trades helps lawmakers make more informed decisions. "Following our last legislative day, one representative came up to me and a group of other PHCC members to thank us," he says. "He pointed out that he and his staff are not plumbers, and the insight we gave is valuable to him."

Giving Back

Schmitt has been an active member since his early years in the industry when his father, Joe Schmitt, who served as PHCC president in 2008-09, took him to PHCC conventions and shared his philosophy of giving back to the industry.

"My father was very involved in government affairs and was involved in state licensing for commercial contractors as well as code issues in the state, so my interest in advocating for the industry came naturally," explains Schmitt. "At the state level, I'm involved in advocating for residential licenses for plumbers because the state only requires licenses for commercial plumbers."

Schmitt also has worked at the national level to advocate for reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, which helps states fund

technical education programs, including apprenticeship programs. "The continuation of these funds is important to solving the workforce issues our industry faces," he says. In Ohio, funds may be used to support a new online program that provides the classroom content for apprenticeship programs, he says. "This is especially important in rural areas of the state by eliminating travel time for apprentices."

"I make time because it's important."

Joe Cornetta, co-owner of Cornetta Bros. Plumbing and Heating, a past president of PHCC of Long Island (New York), and an active supporter of legislative advocacy efforts, admits that his passion for representing the interests of the industry *does* take away from time with his family, his business and his golf game, but he says, "I make time because it's important." Although he volunteers at the national level by participating at the PHCC Legislative Conference and visiting his representatives in Washington D.C.,

he focuses most on state and local issues to better manage his time. Because there is always something going on locally, he stays busy.

"We are working to try to streamline the licensing process in our county because each city, town or village in the county requires a separate license," explains Cornetta. "In my company, I have one person in the office whose main job is to renew the over 35 licenses we need to work in Nassau County because some must be renewed every year and others every three years." Efforts to create a county-wide license that all cities, towns and villages will recognize is ongoing, he says.

"It's important to approach legislators with information and ideas that are professional, not political," points out Cornetta. The workforce challenge is an example of an issue that affects the overall industry and is economic rather than political, he says. "We realized five or six years ago that the greatest numbers of baby boomers will be retiring with no swell of trained people to take our place," he says.



PHCC of Long Island serves on a workforce task force established by Rep. Thomas Suozzi (D-NY) (center). Joe Cornetta (left) and PHCC Vice President Hunter Botto (right) met recently with Rep. Suozzi in Long Island.

“Lobbyists can get the meetings with lawmakers scheduled, but members need to talk to the representatives. ... They are just people who are trying to learn about the people they represent and our issues.”

~ Ronald Schmitt

Fighting for a Better Business Environment

One legislator who has listened to PHCC representatives as well as representatives from other industries is Rep. Thomas Suozzi (D-NY), who has invited PHCC of Long Island to participate on a task force for their district. “Addressing the issue of recruitment and training is not just a plumbing issue, so the

task force includes people representing construction, manufacturing and other industries who have the same challenge,” says Cornetta. “This task force is a good example of the success of our advocacy efforts.” Although meetings of the task force have just begun and there are no results to report, Cornetta points out that the relationship developed with the lawmaker got PHCC in on the ground floor.

When Cornetta joined PHCC in 2000, he was already interested in government relations, policy setting and lobbying due to a cousin who was active with local politics. “I was instantly involved in government relations because I knew that we could fight for a better business environment that was good for our industry and our customers.”

Not all people believe that they have the time to get involved in government relations beyond reading updates on local, state and national issues. “I suggest that members start by writing a letter to their legislator using the information on the PHCC website and updates from the association,” says Schmitt. “Not everyone can travel to legislative day events – state or national – but it is still possible to serve on a committee and offer guidance and input into chapters’ positions.”

There is a need, however, for *all* PHCC members to consider attending legislative day events, says Cornetta. “Elected officials want to hear from their constituents, so visiting them and talking to them about our issues and concerns is something PHCC members must do,” he says. “We can’t rely on association staff and lobbyists.”

Adds Schmitt: “Lobbyists can get the meetings with lawmakers scheduled, but PHCC *members* need to talk to the representatives.” Even after his early involvement in PHCC with his father, Schmitt admits that walking into a Congressman’s office can be intimidating at first. “In the end, however, they are just people who are trying to learn about the people they represent and our issues.” ●

Sheryl S. Jackson is a freelance writer and editor specializing in education, leadership and legislative topics for several industries, including construction.



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