

SMACNA Applauds Passage of The BRAVE Act, Introduced by Rep. Norcross (R-NJ-1)

SMACNA greatly appreciates the essential role Rep. Norcross played as sponsor and outspoken advocate for the BRAVE Act as part of the FY23 Omnibus Appropriations Act. Through his deep understanding for both the career needs of those leaving the Armed Forces and the job opportunities found in the skilled construction trades, he designed an important program benefitting both. The BRAVE Act will offer essential career assistance to Veterans just when they and the construction industry need it most, to build the countless projects created by the recently enacted CHIPS, Infrastructure, and public building efficiency and IAQ retrofit laws. Further, it will give members of the Armed Forces a major advantage when transitioning into the skilled construction trades by requiring the Department of Labor to provide information concerning registered apprenticeship programs across the nation before leaving active duty.

Stan Kolbe, Executive Director for Government and Political Affairs of the Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors National Association (SMACNA) expressed the contractor organization's enthusiastic appreciation for Rep. Norcross' important support for the Veteran's seeking a well-paid and highly skilled construction career. After military service The Brave Act will boost economic opportunities for Vet's in skilled construction careers which include a living wage, health and pension benefits and a distinct and respected career pathway. "The veterans in the skilled HVAC labor workforce have become outstanding leaders in the construction industry just as they were in the armed services. They are respected from their first days on the job and quickly become role models and valued employees. We are also thankful to Rep. Norcross for the BRAVE Act for helping expand our complementary SMART-SMACNA veteran recruitment and training program, the SMART Heroes program." The HVAC veteran training program provides new and soon-to-be veterans with a seven-week, concentrated training, allowing them, upon graduation, to enter sheet metal training centers across the country as a second-year apprentice.

Background:

Five years ago, the SMART Heroes program started giving veterans and active-duty military on the brink of transition to the civilian world an opportunity at a career as a sheet metal worker. To date, more than 400 veterans have graduated to become journey-level sheet metal workers at a time when demand for skilled labor is spiking and private and public projects are expanding rapidly. Working in collaboration the Sheet Metal Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART) and the Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors National Association (SMACNA) created the SMART Heroes program five years ago following more than a decade of active support for the Helmets to Hardhats program, also targeting the placement of those leaving the armed services with an interest in the skilled trades registered apprenticeship program.