

THE BI-MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE DISTRIBUTION CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION



DCA NEWS

MARCH / APRIL 2025

A large saguaro cactus stands prominently on the right side of the cover. The background is a desert landscape with other cacti and shrubs under a dramatic sunset sky with orange and purple hues. In the distance, there are silhouettes of mountains.

**2025
Convention
Recap**



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Welcome Dinner



DCA 2025 Annual Convention Wrap-Up

After a week of brutal cold across much of North America, DCA members dropped into the Phoenix airport in late February ready to thaw out and relax. Arizona's famously sunny winter weather was more than up to the task, welcoming contractors and associates to the expansive Spanish-style grounds of the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess with nary a cloud in any direction and temperatures perfect for a day by the pool.

The Vacuworx Registration Party kicked things off Monday afternoon, February 24, in the shade of the La Hacienda restaurant patio surrounded by gardens of iconic saguaro cacti and other desert greenery. The crowd swelled early as folks browsed the week's activities, signed up for raffles at Vacuworx's customary sponsor table, and belled up to the "hat bar" to find the perfect cowboy look for Friday night's upcoming dance.

Tuesday, February 25

Tuesday morning began bright and early with the annual DCA Fun Walk/Run in the pleasantly cool air of the desert sunrise. Shortly after, the Future Leaders Committee opened the day's business with a call to inform members that a photographer in the lobby was offering professional headshots for the DCA directory,

business profiles, and whatever else members might need them for. Members then sank into the newly minted DCA Deep Dive Webinar Series, which kicked off in January with a pair of sessions on artificial intelligence (AI) implementation. The series features volunteer speakers with ample opportunities for open discussion, and the first two sessions were already well-attended. A Deep Dive subcommittee was proposed, and additional topics already included a sneak peek at the Leadership Development Program (LDP) in March and safety topics in April. Promoting the Deep Dive series would become a recurring theme at committee meetings throughout the convention.

The other major topic of discussion was the Future Leaders Committee taking over some of the Membership and Engagement Committee's duties in welcoming new members. A new connector program would function as "Mentor 2.0" — referencing the earlier initiative from the Membership and Engagement Committee — formally matching new members with veteran guides to help them integrate. The Membership and Engagement Committee will continue to focus on recruiting and retention.



Dave Murk, Sr. Director, API



Ashley Donnini, CEO & Principal, Lola Link Consulting

Conveniently, the Membership and Engagement Committee was up next. Committee member Linda Birkeland of Hallen Construction presented her detailed analysis of member attendance and participation, complete with spreadsheets, prompting a discussion on how best to use that data. The Recruit subcommittee mulled over the possibility of new member packets or kits, member testimonials, and personalized outreach. The Retain subcommittee was working on outreach plans for inactive or lapsed members, succession planning, and developing an exit interview process for departing members. Social media engagement, the annual member survey, and enrollment for the next LDP also made it to the table.

The Safety & Risk Management Committee also looked to add something new to their domain with a proposal for a Foreman Safety Excellence subcommittee and awards program in recognition of foremen's crucial role in implementing jobsite safety every day. They also stated the goal of developing a "Lessons Learned" repository like those used by other organizations. Updates to the "DCA Be Safe" website, suggestions for a new video series on "Safety Gone Wrong," and engaging company leadership in safety culture were discussed, and during the Q&A, the committee clarified the definitions and procedures for the scholarship awards. The DCA 2025 Safety Congress will take place in the French Quarter of New Orleans March 24-26.

As everyone gathered in the big ballroom for the Town Hall and Business Session, DCA Executive Vice President Rob Darden added something new to his usual "state of the DCA" reporting — a detailed and impressively large organizational chart of everything the DCA does for its

members, the industry, and the public. It was an eye-opening reminder of just how active this organization is. After presenting the President's Award and Arthur T. Everham Safety Awards, John Lamerton of Wyo-Ben and the 2025 convention chairman, introduced the first of two speakers: David Murk, senior director of pipelines at the American Petroleum Institute (API).

Murk talked about what was "Just Good Business" for the distribution industry under the current political, social, and economic circumstances. In today's chaotic environment, he emphasized the importance of blocking out the noise and staying true to the industry's core principles of safety, reliability, and responsibility. Murk passed out a worksheet for everyone to participate in his "iceberg exercise," polling the audience to see what political issues are perceived as above the surface or below according to the public versus the industry. Next, he discussed API's political advocacy efforts, its five-point policy roadmap and free trade principles, appealing to bipartisan values. The API's most recent success was getting tariffs on Canadian energy products reduced from 25% to 10%. Long-term, they will continue to emphasize safety, permit reform, and workforce challenges as policy priorities.

Next up was Ashley Donnini, CEO and principal of Lola Link Consulting LLC and a veteran speaker on the DCA stage, asking, "What is a contractor's role in pipeline safety management?" Introducing the members of her PSMS Industry Team panel, she noted that a contractor is leading the team this year. The panel reviewed tools provided by DCA and API to start and assess the quality of a PSMS program, pointing out how the system allows

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Laurie Knape, Panelist
API



Kellie Tetley, Panelist
Plains All American



Colin Frazier, Panelist
API



Jesus Soto, Panelist
Quanta

all participants to speak the same language where safety is concerned. Donnini emphasized that “easy-to-use tools” means questions users can finish in an hour without getting lost in the details. More operators are requiring PSMS before they will hire a contractor, the panel noted, to reduce risk and avoid “being in the headlines.” Lastly, the panel warned that even the current anti-regulatory, populist administration could be pushed to support stricter regulations on gas by a high-profile incident, and those regulations are likely to end up in the hands of legislators with no real knowledge of the gas industry. Donnini then reiterated the call to adopt PSMS voluntarily before the government forces the issue.

The Workforce Development Committee followed the Town Hall, featuring two more guest speakers. First, Arizona SkillsUSA Director Michelle Martinez asked the audience directly what they were looking for, bringing up the importance of soft skills like communication in addition to the hard skills the group is known for best. She differentiated between connecting people to apprenticeships which SkillsUSA does and providing them, then went on to discuss career clusters and assessment methods. She wrapped up with opportunities to sponsor kids at the SkillsUSA national conference and world championships.

The second speaker was Randy Blount of BuildWitt, whose presentation on “Winning with Growth” focused on the importance of job training. Statistics show that organizations with a strong learning culture are 92% more creative and 52% more productive, and that investing just 1% of the labor budget in training can produce an 11% increase in productivity. Relating the story of an Alcoa CEO, he highlighted the need to look at processes, practice sharing difficult information, ask questions, and help people learn how to teach. Blount also noted causes of accidents unrelated to training, such as

dehydration, lack of sleep, mental health, and untrained management. He urged companies to utilize existing meetings, ask employees to share, explain the “why” behind decisions, and use the power of debriefings to improve trust and safety culture for a more productive team.

Tuesday evening, the Caterpillar Welcome Reception and Dinner began with drinks on the hotel lawn. String lights and fire pits lit the scene while a Spanish guitar player set the mood. A pair of great horned owls watched the large crowd of attendees from nearby rooftops as the stars slowly came out. Once the crowd was sufficiently lubricated, an Apache hoop dancer performed with his singer/drummer and led members down the path to the buffet dinner. The guitar player joined his band, playing Spanish-style versions of popular songs at a relaxing pace. Hopi kachina dolls decorated each table, and the lucky guests with a ribbon on their chairs were invited to take it home. Many lingered late into the evening, unwilling to break the spell of an enchanting desert night.

Wednesday, February 26

Wednesday morning began with the John Deere Opening Keynote Breakfast and a series of tributes. Rob Darden reminded the audience that this convention would be director of meetings and events Becky Hopkins' swan song before her retirement, back in Phoenix, the city where her career first started, and that director of administration Teri Korson would follow suit this summer in her home state of Wisconsin. He called the entire DCA staff up on stage for well-deserved special recognition, getting a little choked up in the process. Next, it was 2024 DCA President Mark Albert's turn to watch a “Mission Impossible” video tribute to his year as president and offer a few words in his own inimitable style.



Rob Darden, Executive Vice President, DCA



Kyle Scheele, Author, Artist, and Speaker

Once breakfast was over and the tears were dry, it was time for some laughter with keynote speaker Kyle Scheele, "Patron Saint of Crazy Ideas." Scheele started his career in high school selling corny joke T-shirts before breaking into the Urban Outfitters market on a suitcase and a prayer. He has since gone on to make money turning a tandem bicycle into the "Centaur of Attention," goofing around with a family photo on TikTok, writing a children's book based on a conversation in a pizza shop, and staging the world's largest pretend marathon (twice!). "If you want crazy results, you have to embrace crazy ideas," Scheele says. He left the audience with the Five Things Every Idea Needs:

1. A chance - never say, "I am not a creative person"—even a spreadsheet can be a work of creativity.
2. A home - write ideas down before you forget them, no matter how silly they seem.
3. A time and a place - there's no such thing as the perfect time or place; just do it.
4. A bodyguard - protect your idea from naysayers long enough to give it a fighting chance.
5. A crew - collaborators and supporters are critical for taking an idea to crazy heights.

On that note, the Innovation and Technology Committee took over, quickly jumping into a discussion of Miniso translator headphones tested by one of the committee members. The headphones, paired with a smartphone app, can translate one spoken language into another in close to real time and currently supports 136 languages. The group recognized strong potential for smoothing communications on multilingual construction crews. From there, things segued into how AI can

be used to benefit construction, from auditing tools and recruiting to traffic control, PPE usage, weather interpretation, and wearable technology. Someone suggested a demonstration of what AI can and cannot do, while another raised cybersecurity concerns. The committee recommended collaboration and sharing with other organizations, and Randy Rupp of Ditch Witch concluded the meeting with his kudos for the new committee structure improving the quality of discussion.

Wednesday afternoon, it was time to enjoy the desert, whether hiking, horseback riding, kayaking, rappelling off a cliff, or riding around in ATVs. Folks were slow to trickle into the evening auction buffet at first, but the low conversation over the silent auction display gradually built to a loud din as the start of the live auction drew near. The action jumped quickly as all manner of heavy equipment, jewelry, football tickets, hunting and fishing trips, drilling supplies, rentals, guns, golf packages, and even a cuckoo clock went up for bids. All told, the silent and live auctions raised over \$580,000 this year for DCA scholarships and outreach.

Thursday, February 27

Thursday morning's Ditch Witch Group Breakfast was a leisurely affair with auction totals and the recipients of the DCA-Dale R. Michels and Curtis Allen scholarships announced. After everyone had a chance to fuel up and wake up, their minds were sharp and ready for the LEGO group challenge. Each table became a team as packs of different colored LEGO bricks were distributed, along with packets of string, construction paper, and various other decorative items. DCA "celebrities" would

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Ditch Witch Group Breakfast LEGO winners

be the judges for the challenge: Who would create the best LEGO replica of famous world landmarks? Pictures of the Empire State Building, the Taj Mahal, Angkor Wat, the Golden Gate Bridge, the Tower of London, and the Petronas Towers were passed out as guides to build from. Some tables stuck mostly to bricks, while others took full advantage of paper and string. The concentration was intense as the big kids and the little kids jockeyed over which piece to put where for the best towers and trusses and domes. The room full of future architects and closet master builders left the judges with quite a challenge indeed, but ultimately Table 15 won out with their fanciful depiction of Angkor Wat, winning everyone a spectacularly sparkly dollar-sign neck chain to show off in the airport on the long ride home.

Fresh off the high of competition, the Trenchless and HDD Committee met for the only business of the day. Dr. Sam Ariaratnam, professor and Sunstate Chair of Management and Engineering at Arizona State University, began with a recap of recent activity from the USDOT Gas Pipeline Advisory Committee (GPAC) that he serves on. GPAC is operating under a new secretary of transportation, Sean Duffy, and since last report has worked on pipeline classification, leak detection, PHMSA standards, and reviews of LNG facilities, with permit reform up for debate soon. Dr. Sam noted that although the direction of the new administration was uncertain in Washington, the overall outlook for the gas business appeared positive over the next four to 12 years. He

contrasted this with the previous administration, which had PHMSA focusing more on environmental concerns than pipeline safety.

The subcommittee updates sought to define the roles and goals for each of the still-new subcommittees. The Education for Engineers and Planners group generated an interesting discussion on how to prevent bad designs, drawings, RFPs, and locations by providing good and bad examples, detailing "ideal" project conditions, and adding detail to contract documents, among other ideas. Technology as Innovation will focus more on exit-side safety and equipment longevity, while the Mapping and Planning group emphasizes good bore planning for small versus big rigs.

Friday, February 28

Friday's Century Products Closing Keynote Breakfast featured the much-anticipated keynote speaker Kevin O'Leary, known satirically as "Mr. Wonderful" on the TV shows "Dragon's Den" in Canada and "Shark Tank" in the U.S. After an introductory video about his life and philosophy, O'Leary began a fascinating breakdown of how exactly the U.S. economy managed to weather a pandemic that might have caused a full-on depression in earlier decades and come out stronger on the other side. Forced isolation accelerated the adoption of new technology — particularly videoconferencing — even among older people who were typically resistant to going digital. As retail outlets struggled with empty stores, producers shifted to direct-to-customer sales through



Kevin O'Leary Entrepreneur, Financial Consultant, and *Shark Tank* panelist

the internet, cutting out the middleman. This shift not only reduced costs, but produced enormous amounts of customer data as well, which quickly became more valuable than oil. Despite the failures of some old-school businesses, many others were now experiencing higher profit margins than ever before. O'Leary called this "the digitization of America," a phenomenon of the uniquely flexible American economy that other parts of the world could not easily replicate so rapidly. The audience was rapt with attention.

O'Leary went on to illustrate his points with cases from "Shark Tank," including a mother/daughter cupcake business that thrived on social media through personality and drama and a cleaning supply business that should have cratered during the pandemic but instead soared thanks to a brilliant midnight marketing campaign aided by O'Leary himself appearing in their commercial. He articulated his keys to success in attracting investors to your business: Be able to articulate your idea in 90 seconds or less, convince people you have the right team to execute your business plan, have a comprehensive understanding of your business model, and know your numbers. He also described why he cuts off his children after their education is complete, quoting his mother that "The dead bird under the nest never learns to fly."

After all that, O'Leary still had time for a Q&A, and DCA members eagerly stood up. In his inimitable no-BS style, O'Leary gave his opinions on subjects ranging from empty office buildings and data center power demands,

winner versus loser states (making it easier or harder to do business), Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) job cuts, and the stability of the oil and gas industry. He told a story about his infamous wristwatches, opined on the war in Ukraine and how Canada and America should really cooperate, and gave his thoughts on how to solve the national debt. O'Leary concluded by saying that America's number one export is the "American Dream," and the best thing we can do is keep that alive.

The Government Relations Committee came next to wrap up the week's business. DCA Washington liaison Eben Wyman of Wyman Associates began his week testifying before the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee alongside Emanuel Paris of Alex E. Paris Contracting before flying into Phoenix to join the convention. He recapped their testimony on support for the new pipeline safety bill, noting that it went extremely well, and Wyman gave a glowing review of Paris' performance (*See page 26 for a summary of the testimony*). They believe that getting the new PHMSA director confirmed is a positive sign that Congress is serious about safety. The subject turned toward regional Washington fly-ins and strategy for a bit before moving on to the new administration's "Day One" executive orders and actions, including declaring an American energy crisis, "Unleashing American Energy," and regulatory freezes. Wyman posited that none of it counts

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(l to r) 2025 DCA President Whitney and Dan Carson; Katheen Faria and Mark Albert 2024 DCA President

until it goes through the legislative process, but the DCA will still have to play defense against some budget-cutting initiatives and to avoid a PSMS requirement. Mark Albert spoke passionately on the importance of repealing the estate tax and its effect on small family businesses. The committee discussed a DCA letter to the President and the 119th Congress on the role of natural gas, the need to expand pipeline capacity, and its impacts on national security. Finally, the regulatory update covered recent actions by the Department of Energy and the EPA, including the observation that utilities in some parts of the country are starting to bring construction in-house again.

After yet another gorgeous afternoon in the desert, members gathered one last time in their best western finery for Vermeer's "Denim & Lace" President's Dinner. The ballroom was decked out in barnwood and string lights, with racks of cowboy hats, saguaro-shaped lights and decorations, barrels, wagon wheels, saddles, and other artifacts of frontier life. 2024 DCA President Mark Albert of AGI Construction rode onto the stage one last time with his stick horse to pass his badge to "the new sheriff in town," incoming DCA President Dan Carson of Carson Corp., as the "Magnificent Seven" theme spurred them to glory. At last, hot new country band Chapel Hart took over the spotlight to get boots a-scootin' on the



Chapel Hart

dance floor. Their intro told the story of how they were discovered on "America's Got Talent," and the three ladies kept the dance floor busy with a mix of originals and country classics in their powerful and lovely voices. The highlight of the evening was a special performance of Dolly Parton's "9 to 5" dedicated to Becky Hopkins to the delight of all.

The DCA will meet next at the Grand Geneva Resort & Spa in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, July 14-17 for the Mid Year Meeting. We look forward to seeing you there. ▲

2024 DCA Arthur T. Everham Safety Award



Safety excellence was recognized by several DCA contractor members for the effectiveness of their respective programs in 2024. The DCA established the Arthur T. Everham Safety Award in 1986 to recognize contractors with exceptional safety programs. The revised and updated judging criteria includes: the number of OSHA lost workday cases, number of OSHA restricted duty days, number of fatalities, the presence of a documented safety management system (SMS), the use of a drug-testing program, and the company's root cause analysis (RCA) system.

The award is highly coveted as recipients are recognized and honored by competitors. For 2024, the categories awarded are:

Under 250,000 Hour Category:

First Place – (a 4-way tie)

- Atlas Trenchless, LLC, Rockville, MN
- Brotherton Pipeline, Inc., Gold Hill, OR
- Eastern Utilities Services, Melville, NY
- R&R Pipeline, Newark, OH

Second Place

PE Ben USA, Inc., Houston, TX

250,000 to 700,000 Hours:

First Place

Primoris Distribution Services, Dade City, FL

Second Place

Alex E. Paris Contracting Company, Inc., Atlasburg, PA

700,000 to 2 Million Hours:

First Place

Michels Utility Services Inc., Brownsville, WI

Second Place

Grace Industries LLC, Melville, NY

Over 2 Million Man Hours:

First Place

Q3 Contracting Inc., Little Canada, MN

Second Place

WSB LLC, St. Paul, MN

Save the Date for the Mid Year Meeting

July 13-16, 2025 • Grand Geneva Resort & Spa, Lake Geneva, WI



Committee News



2025 Convention

The DCA Board of Directors and the seven working committees met at the 2025 DCA Convention, February 24-March 1, at the Fairmont Princess Hotel in Scottsdale, Arizona.

2024 Board of Directors

The DCA Board of Directors met at the Fairmont Princess in Scottsdale, Arizona, on February 24, 2025. Board members reviewed 2024 financial reports, along with the 2025 convention's schedule of events, and noted participation from 80 first-time attendees. The board addressed low response rates to the annual equipment survey and discussed strategies for improving future engagement. Key discussion topics included details about the upcoming Leadership Development Program in Dallas, Texas; the 2025 Mid Year Meeting at the Grand Geneva Resort & Spa in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin; staff retirements; and recent staff onboardings. The meeting concluded with a commitment to enhance membership engagement and support organizational growth.

Before adjournment, the Board of Directors acknowledged three outgoing board members — Sarah Mahlik, TT Technologies; Mike Hickey, Hallen Construction; and Ray Swerdfeger, Miller Pipeline — and expressed gratitude for their time, commitment, and contributions to the board.

Leadership Council

The Leadership Council also met on Monday, February 24. The council reviewed the actions of the Board of Directors at their earlier meeting. Each DCA working committee's

chairman briefly outlined the topics their committee would be discussing in its individual meetings.

The Leadership Council comprises the elected chairs and co-chairs of each of the committees, along with the DCA Board of Directors. The purpose of the Leadership Council is to coordinate the strategic direction of the DCA as directed by the Board of Directors.

Future Leaders Committee

The Future Leaders Committee convened to discuss key initiatives aimed at enhancing professional development, networking, and member engagement. A primary focus was the renewal of the committee's charter, emphasizing outreach efforts and engagement strategies. The committee introduced the DCA Deep Dive initiative, designed to foster knowledge sharing by leveraging internal expertise. Members were encouraged to participate as both attendees and speakers, with discussions on expanding the initiative to monthly sessions and making recordings accessible on the DCA website. Additionally, the upcoming Leadership Development Program in April was promoted with past participants praising its emphasis on self-analysis and collaborative learning.

A new connector program was proposed to support new members in building relationships and navigating events. Strategies included launching a members-only DCA website section featuring committee member biographies to ease networking efforts. The committee also announced the departure of the current chair, initiating the nomination process for a new co-chair, and seeking candidates to fill two vacant positions. After the con-

vention in Scottsdale, a vote was conducted to confirm Kelsey Moreland of Precision Pipeline as the new co-chair to join Laura Mason of Caterpillar Inc. in leading the Future Leaders Committee.

Membership & Engagement Committee

The Membership & Engagement Committee convened to explore strategies aimed at strengthening member participation and retention within the organization. Linda Birkeland of Hallen Construction presented a data analysis of attendance from 2021 to 2025, revealing that 63% of companies consistently sent the same representatives to events. This trend underscored the need for a junior membership program to diversify participation and foster future industry leadership. Additionally, the committee discussed the creation of a shared resource to centralize data access, supporting strategic planning and targeted recruitment efforts.

A significant portion of the discussion centered on expanding DCA's membership base. The committee explored outreach strategies targeting companies that had not previously engaged with the association and reviewed promotional materials, including a flyer outlining the benefits of DCA membership. Emphasizing the power of testimonials, the group proposed featuring long-standing members' success stories to highlight the tangible advantages of joining DCA. Additionally, the committee is developing an outreach plan to re-engage inactive members while considering the implementation of an exit interview process to better understand reasons for member disengagement.

To assess member satisfaction and identify areas for improvement, the committee is conducting a survey and comparing responses to a similar 2021 initiative. Early results indicate general member satisfaction, though concerns remain about the perceived impact of DCA membership on business success and career advancement. The discussion also emphasized the role of social media, particularly LinkedIn, in increasing visibility and engagement. With DCA currently at 1,800 LinkedIn followers, members were encouraged to interact with and share content to enhance outreach.

The meeting also included updates on membership applications with two new contract members approved. Overall membership saw a slight decline, prompting focused efforts on contractor engagement. The committee concluded the meeting by reaffirming its commitment to fostering an inclusive, engaged, and expanding membership base. Members were encouraged to continue their outreach efforts and leverage available resources to strengthen the association's impact within the industry. If your company would be interested in sharing a testimonial with the DCA, please contact DCA Director of Membership Jacob Adams Mireles (jadams@dcaweb.org).

Safety & Risk Management Committee

The Safety & Risk Management Committee convened to discuss strategies for strengthening safety leadership and engagement across the organization. A primary focus for 2025 includes recognizing outstanding safety leadership among foremen, improving engagement strategies for safety professionals, and developing a repository for shared lessons learned. The committee also emphasized the need to enhance the DCA safety website and promote a leadership development program that equips participants with tools to advocate for safety initiatives.

A key discussion point was the lack of submissions for the Safety Director of the Year Award, despite receiving multiple nominations for the Safety Person of the Year Award. The winners of the annual Arthur Everham Safety Award were announced. The committee also explored the creation of a new award specifically recognizing foremen and invited members to help establish criteria.

Concerns were raised about outdated training materials and broken links on the DCA safety website. In response, the committee will form a subcommittee to review and update resources. Additionally, a research-backed guidebook on workforce engagement was introduced as a tool to improve safety culture on construction sites. To foster knowledge-sharing, the committee agreed to develop case studies highlighting key safety lessons from incidents while maintaining anonymity. These efforts align with the committee's ongoing commitment to improving safety standards and fostering a culture of continuous learning within the industry. Volunteers are also being sought for a website subcommittee dedicated to enhancing safety resources.

Workforce Development Committee

The Workforce Development Committee convened to discuss strategies for fostering a strong learning culture within organizations, emphasizing the link between continuous training and increased productivity. The committee's 2025 goals include the work of its two subcommittees, one focused on SkillsUSA and the compilation of a robust list of trade and technical schools for DCA and its members to partner with to develop the future workforce. Committee attendees welcomed two guest speakers in Scottsdale who spoke of industry opportunities that align with the work of each subcommittee.

SkillsUSA

Michelle Martinez, Arizona State Director with SkillsUSA, shared how their framework combines personal, technical, and workplace skills to help students identify different career paths beyond a traditional four-year degree program. SkillsUSA provides an opportunity for employers to connect with the various programs offered by SkillsUSA

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on a local, regional, state, and national level. The SkillsUSA programs are developed and implemented by business and industry with a focus on driving the future forward to prepare students for future careers. Any companies interested in learning more about SkillsUSA and how they can contribute to a well-established program advancing skilled trades are encouraged to contact DCA Director of Membership Jacob Adams Mireles (jadams@dcaweb.org).

BuildWitt

Randy Blount, Chief Product Officer with BuildWitt, shared his insights on how companies with a well-established learning culture are significantly more innovative and efficient, even with minimal investment in formal training. Committee members were encouraged to integrate small yet impactful learning moments into existing meetings, catering to modern workforce preferences for accessible and flexible training, particularly through micro-learning techniques designed to improve knowledge retention.

A key topic of discussion was the importance of engaging safety meetings to combat complacency on job sites. Committee dialogue explored strategies such as using open-ended questions and personal experiences to create more interactive and impactful safety discussions. The committee also examined the connection between worker health and job safety, noting that factors like dehydration and sleep deprivation can impair cognitive function and increase the likelihood of workplace incidents. Additionally, concerns were raised about the mental health challenges within the construction workforce, with 83% of workers reportedly experiencing such issues.

The meeting also addressed the pressing need for improved managerial training within the industry. Many supervisors, despite their expertise in construction, lack formal management education. To bridge this gap, committee members advocated for daily training initiatives that utilize hands-on demonstrations and peer-led teaching to enhance knowledge retention and skill development. Encouraging a culture of continuous learning and strategic workforce engagement was underscored as a crucial step in improving overall job performance and safety standards.

Innovation & Technology Committee

As the newest working committee, the Innovation & Technology Committee convened for an engaging discussion on advancing technology integration within the construction industry. With a strong emphasis on collaboration, members were encouraged to participate in the Spring Member Survey aimed at gathering insights on key topics, particularly in robotics, drones, and artificial intelligence (AI). The committee, which has made significant strides since its inception, continues to focus on improving efficiency, safety, and sustainability for contractors through emerging technologies.

A major highlight of the meeting was the discussion on AI's role in enhancing work quality and addressing workforce challenges. Committee members reviewed past Deep Dive Webinar sessions on AI, featuring industry experts, and emphasized the importance of making these insights accessible to staff. AI's potential to tackle field-related issues, such as mental health concerns and communication barriers for non-English speakers, was explored. Safety advancements were also a focal point, with members reviewing AI-powered devices designed to enhance traffic management on job sites. By analyzing traffic patterns and detecting work zone intrusions, new systems aim to reduce congestion and improve safety by removing personnel from hazardous areas with plans to integrate the devices with real-time mapping tools.

The meeting concluded with a call for increased collaboration among committees to further explore safety innovations and technology-driven solutions. Leadership transitions were announced, with Jonathan Tippetts of ISCO Industries and Eli Pagel of B&H Construction appointed as co-chairs and a call for volunteers to fill additional committee roles. Discussions underscored the importance of continued innovation while addressing cybersecurity concerns and leveraging wearable technology to improve safety in the field.

Trenchless & HDD Committee

The Trenchless & HDD Committee discussed industry developments, regulatory updates, and advancements in trenchless construction technology. Dr. Sam Ariaratnam of Arizona State University joined the discussion to contribute insights on industry objectives. A key topic of discussion centered on the Gas Pipeline Advisory Committee's review of regulations related to natural gas, CO2, and hydrogen. Members expressed optimism about potential regulatory relief under the new administration, particularly regarding permit reform. Collaboration with the Government Relations Committee was highlighted as a priority to advocate for energy pipeline interests, emphasizing a shift in focus from environmental concerns to public safety. Additionally, the committee discussed revisiting siting rules for LNG projects, hoping recent executive orders would streamline progress.

Education and improved project planning were also major points of discussion. Committee members stressed the need for better designs to prevent permitting delays, citing a recent municipal project where poor design caused construction setbacks, solidifying the need to advocate for early contractor involvement to mitigate risks. The committee also explored new technologies, such as exit-side camera systems and advanced diagnostic tools, to enhance safety and efficiency in HDD operations. Future engagement efforts were discussed, including recruiting new members for both the main committee and its safety subcommittee.

Government Relations Committee

The Government Relations Committee recently convened to discuss key legislative and regulatory issues affecting the underground construction industry with regard to the new administration. The meeting covered pipeline safety advocacy, regulatory updates, and strategic initiatives aimed at advancing industry interests.

Pipeline Safety Advocacy and Legislative Updates

DCA was invited to provide testimony before the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, emphasizing the importance of improved mapping and collaboration to prevent damage to distribution lines. The committee acknowledged challenges in advancing pipeline safety legislation but expressed optimism about new congressional bills promoting best practices in damage prevention.

Regional Fly-In Teams and Advocacy Efforts

Matthew Patterson of Sharewell HDD introduced the concept of regional fly-in teams, underscoring the need for active participation, particularly in Colorado as part of the Southwest region. Recent advocacy efforts engaged over 30 legislators, reinforcing the importance of strong constituent relationships. The committee stressed the need for regional representatives to strengthen discussions with lawmakers and enhance follow-up engagement. Members interested in getting more involved in advocacy efforts are encouraged to contact Eben Wyman (eben@wymanassociates.net).

Regulatory Changes and Industry Challenges

The meeting also addressed ongoing regulatory changes, including the water heater rule and methane fee. Concerns were raised about uncertainty within the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), as key personnel transitions could impact agency relations. President Trump's recent executive actions on energy infrastructure were also reviewed, with a focus on their potential impact on pipeline development and regulatory reforms.

Tax Policy and Industry Priorities

The committee discussed tax policy concerns, particularly the repeal of the estate tax, which is seen as a significant burden on family-owned construction businesses.

Corporate tax rates and incentives for carbon capture and storage were also key topics, with an emphasis on preserving and expanding tax credits critical to the industry's growth.

Strengthening Industry Collaboration

Committee members highlighted the importance of improved communication with elected officials, noting gaps in lawmakers' understanding of the industry's challenges. Efforts to enhance industry collaboration were discussed, with representatives from organizations such as API, AGA, and APGA expressing their commitment to shared advocacy goals. Additionally, the growing role of contractors in utility work was recognized, particularly in competitive regions like the Northeast.

For more details about government relations topics, see the *DCA Insights* section of the *DCA News*.

2025 Board of Directors

The 2025 DCA Board of Directors held their first meeting on Friday, February 28. President Dan Carson of Carson Corporation welcomed new board members: Director at Large Randy Bunch, Eastern Utilities Services; Directors Bill Colson, Prettec Directional Drilling; Chad Davis, Miller Pipeline; Nate Eastway, Gabe's Construction Co.; and Rob Hotz, ECI Contracting; Past President Director Dale Anderson, Miller Pipeline; Senior Associate Member Director Mike James, ISCO Industries; and Junior Associate Member Director Ken Hugen, RDO Equipment Co.

Board members received updates and discussed the 2025 DCA budget, the 2025 calendar of events, improvements to the DCA convention and committee meeting structures, the equipment study, and member interaction. The directors also discussed their 2025 goals and objectives, focusing on engaging smaller contractors considering the number of contractors being consolidated, as well as involving younger company employees with DCA.

The next Board of Directors, Leadership Council, and committee meetings will take place in conjunction with the 2025 DCA Mid Year Meeting, scheduled for July 14-17 at the Grand Geneva Resort & Spa in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. ▲

If you are interested in becoming an active member of any of the working committees, please contact the DCA office.



Momentum Continues with DCA's New Working Committee Structure to Engage More Members

Committees play a crucial role in shaping industry standards, advancing best practices, and fostering innovation to drive progress. By bringing together experts and stakeholders, DCA's committees develop guidelines, advocate for policy improvements, and create educational opportunities that enhance industry knowledge and workforce development. Following much discussion at the 2024 Convention in Hawaii and implementation of a new committee structure at the 2024 Mid Year Meeting, the momentum continues to engage more companies and advance the work of the natural gas distribution industry.

DCA's working committees are tasked with the advancement of the strategic goals of the DCA and solving problems facing the industry. The working committee structure provides DCA with the ability to leverage subject matter expertise, identify issues confronting the industry, and disseminate information to the association membership. In 2024, the DCA Board of Directors approved seven working committees tasked with a specific purpose as outlined in its respective charter that includes measurable goals and objectives.

The seven working committees include:

- Future Leaders
- Government Relations
- Innovation & Technology
- Membership & Engagement
- Safety & Risk Management
- Trenchless & HDD
- Workforce Development

The committees meet regularly to identify and address key issues and concerns within their scope of responsibility. Each working committee may determine if a sub-committee is required to best address a given topic. Sub-committees may be composed of DCA members and are not restricted by number or company affiliation.

How are the committees organized?

Committee makeup – Each committee should have a broad representation of the DCA membership. Working committees should have a minimum of 10 and maximum of 20 committee members. Ideally, each company should have only one representative on each committee, but no more than two are permitted.

The committee member's seat is based on the qualifications of the individual, not on the company they represent i.e., John Doe of member company, not member company represented by John Doe. The goal of each committee is to have an even balance of contractors and associates with the exception of the Safety (majority of contractors) and Membership (majority of associates) committees.

Committee leadership – Each working committee has a Committee Chair (contractor member) and Co-Chair (associate member nominated and approved by the committee membership). There are two exceptions: The Safety & Risk Management chair and co-chair should both be contractor members, and the Membership & Engagement Committee chair and co-chairs should both be associate members.



All committee chairs serve for a three-year term. The chairs appoint a secretary from the committee membership who will then be responsible for taking meeting minutes. The secretary can be either a contractor or associate and may be considered for a chair position upon the end of the chair's term. To broaden leadership opportunities within the DCA, board members are not eligible to serve as working committee chairs. However, they may serve as a duly appointed member or non-voting advisor to the committees.

Committee leadership will update the Board of Directors during the Leadership Council Meeting at the Annual Convention and Mid Year Meeting, describing current and future goals; purpose and impact of the goals for DCA, members, and/or the industry; and effectiveness of the goals.

DCA staff support – The DCA Director of Membership serves as staff liaison for each of the seven committees. The staff liaison facilitates committee meetings, allocates DCA resources, and serves as the general business administrator for the committee.

How do you join a committee?

Annually, the chairs and DCA leadership will 1) gauge the interest of each member to renew committee membership for an additional term and 2) evaluate the participation and contribution quality of each member. Timing of committee leadership and membership selection:

- **Mid Year Meeting** – Request for interest in being on a committee, nominations to serve.
- **Fall Meeting** – Selection to the committee.
- **Convention** – Handoff to new leadership at the end of the committee meeting at the convention. Sitting chairs (not secretaries or elected future chairs) attend the Leadership Council Meeting and Leadership Lunch.

Members of a working committee serve a two-year term. Individuals may renew their membership for up to three terms or six years, including time served as a chair if applicable, after which they shall yield their seat to a new member.

When do the committees meet?

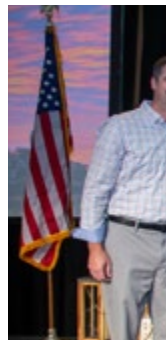
The working committees meet formally for 45 minutes to one hour at least four times per year — three in conjunction with the DCA meetings, plus at least one virtual meeting. A majority of sitting members of the committee, including the chairs, will constitute a quorum to make decisions. Committee members are expected to participate in at least 75% of the scheduled meetings, either in person or virtually.

The chairs should attend **all** committee meetings — particularly the Annual Convention — to ensure alignment with DCA priorities and attendance at the Leadership Council Meeting (in conjunction with the Board of Directors Meeting).

How much time do members spend working on committees?

In addition to attending the required three out of four annual committee meetings (totaling three to four hours), committee members can typically expect to spend around 10 additional hours per year working on committee projects and assignments such as creating new content/documents, attending events, and other volunteer work.

For more information on how you can get involved with DCA's working committees and contribute to the advancement of our industry, reach out to Jacob Adams Mireles, Director of Membership (jadams@dcaweb.org). ▲







Kevin Michels, DCA-Dale R. Michels Scholarship



Clint Pitman, DCA-Curtis H. Allen Scholarship

DCA-Dale R. Michels Scholarship Recipients Announced

Eleven students were given a financial boost when they were selected by the scholarship committee as recipients of the 2025-26 DCA-Dale R. Michels Endowed Scholarship. The scholarship was founded in 1998 in honor of DCA Honorary Member and Past President Dale R. Michels from the proceeds of the DCA's annual auction. The committee is pleased to announce that with DCA members' generous support of the DCA auctions, \$105,000 in scholarships has been awarded to both students starting college and people who are returning to college. The recipients for the 2025-26 academic year are:

- Addison Becht, InfraSource LLC
- Isaac Bernier, Precision Pipeline LLC – WI
- Lilah Collins, Mears Group Inc.
- Ariyah Ellis, Q3 Contracting Inc.
- Zachary Esser, Miller Electric Mfg. LLC
- Nora Hancock, National Center for Construction Education and Research

- Rhett Kennedy, Ditch Witch
- Koyuki Massey, Miller Electric Mfg. LLC
- Isabela Moreno, ISCO Industries
- Carter Sagan, Komatsu America Corp.
- Avery Serink, National Center for Construction Education and Research
- Samuel Tholen, TT Technologies Inc.

The 2025 DCA-Dale R. Michels Scholarship committee was comprised of Mark Albert, AGI Construction Inc.; Linda Birkeland, Hallen Construction; Jim Lagios, Atlas Trenchless LLC; Sarah Mahlik, TT Technologies Inc.; Laura Mason, Caterpillar Inc.; Kevin Michels, Michels Corporation; Eli Pagel, B&H Construction LLC; Eddie Ramos, North Country Directional Drilling LLC; Doug Reeves, Primoris Services Corporation; and Ollie Windle, Digital Control Incorporated. ▲

DCA-Curtis Allen Scholarship Recipients Announced

Five students were selected as recipients of the DCA-Curtis H. Allen Scholarship. The scholarship was founded in 2010 in honor of Curtis Allen, and emphasis is given to students entering a vocational, trade, or technical school. The scholarship receives funding from the DCA auctions. The recipients for the 2025-26 academic year are:

- Lilly Fain, Mears Group Inc.
- Kaden Greeson, Consolidated Pipe & Supply Co.

- Tanner Moles, Ditch Witch
- Robert Riley, Miller Electric Mfg. LLC
- Michael Rojas, Veteran Pipeline Construction

The 2025 DCA-Curtis Allen committee was comprised of Dan Carson, Carson Corporation; Nate Eastway, Gabe's Construction Co.; Pete Fojtik, MP Technologies LLC; Mike James, ISCO Industries; John Koski, Viking Mat Company; and Clint Pitman, DMD Drilling Mud Direct. ▲

Calendar

2025 & 2026 DCA and Industry Events

2025

MAY 26-29

Pipe Line Contractors Association of Canada
(PLCAC) Convention
Fairmont Banff Springs
Banff, Alberta
www.pipeline.ca

JUNE 23-27

SkillsUSA TechSPO
Georgia World Congress Center
Atlanta, Georgia
www.nlsc.skillsusa.org

JULY 14-17

DCA Mid Year Meeting
Grand Geneva Resort & Spa
Lake Geneva, Wisconsin
dcaweb.org

SEPTEMBER 15-19

IPLOCA 2025 Convention
SwissHotel
Izmir, Turkey
www.iploca.com

SEPTEMBER 16-18

Global Damage Prevention Summit
Hilton Anatole Hotel
Dallas, Texas
www.actsnowinc.com/globaldps/registration

2025 (cont.)

OCTOBER 29-31

DCA Fall Meeting
Gaylord Texan Resort & Convention Center
Grapevine, Texas
dcaweb.org

2026

JANUARY 27-29

Underground Infrastructure Conference (UIC)
Henry B. González Convention Center
San Antonio, Texas
ui-conference.com

FEBRUARY 11-15

2025 PLCA Convention
Arizona Biltmore
Phoenix, Arizona
www.plca.org

FEBRUARY 23-28

DCA Annual Convention
Trump National Doral
Miami, Florida
dcaweb.org

ATTENTION ALL DCA MEMBERS!

So you do not miss out on future meeting and event notices, please have your company's IT representative whitelist all emails from dcaweb.org. If you have any questions, please contact Jacob Adams Mireles at jadams@dcaweb.org.

Insights



PHMSA Issues Advisory Bulletin on Safety Management Systems

DCA has been involved in efforts to implement and expand programs and practices related to pipeline safety management systems (SMS) soon after the release of the American Petroleum Institute's (API) Recommended Practice 1173: Pipeline Safety Management Systems (API RP 1173). The concept of implementing SMS approaches throughout the pipeline industry has been embraced by both operators and contractors. At the same time, most industry stakeholders agree that any efforts to mandate SMS would undermine the overall concepts of safety management.

The government seems to agree, at least so far. Last year, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) issued a Safety Recommendation that advised PHMSA to "[i]ssue an advisory bulletin to all Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration-regulated pipeline owners and operators, promoting the benefits of pipeline safety management systems and asking them to develop and implement such a system..."

On March 25, PHMSA issued its advisory bulletin, calling for operators to voluntarily implement SMS into their operations. The advisory bulletin echoes NTSB's view that voluntary adoption will build on minimum safety regulations to improve safety and encourage operators to implement pipeline SMS covering the elements included in API 1173.

PHMSA encourages the voluntary adoption of SMS based on a framework such as the one detailed in API RP 1173. PHMSA believes developing and implementing SMS would be effective in enhancing pipeline safety systematically. It shares NTSB's view that a voluntarily adopted SMS program can ensure pipelines are designed, constructed, operated, and maintained in a way that complies with more than just the minimum safety standards found in regulations.

PHMSA's advisory bulletin encourages pipeline owners and operators to take the following actions to strengthen their pipeline safety programs:

- Implement a pipeline SMS program and ensure that the program covers all essential elements of an effective SMS, such as those in API RP 1173.
- Ensure the SMS program continuously evolves and improves.
- Maintain a positive safety culture that continually promotes diligence throughout the operator's organization and addresses issues that can erode the safety culture.

The bulletin expressly notes that it is voluntary and not a requirement or binding in any way. While the messages in PHMSA's bulletin, along with NTSB's Safety Recommendation, should be considered a "win" for industry, we need to stay in front of any attempt to mandate SMS approaches. DCA's SMS Task Force will continue to work as part of the SMS Industry Team on effective ways to expand SMS throughout our industry.

Natural Gas Council Calls for White House Action on Key Industry Priorities

On February 14, 2025, President Trump established the National Energy Dominance Council with the goal of expanding reliable and affordable energy production, including natural gas. The new executive order (EO) aims to leverage the United States' natural resources and leadership in energy technologies to support economic growth, national security, and global influence. It calls for expanding all forms of reliable and affordable energy production to address inflation, create jobs, and reduce dependence on foreign imports.

The EO seeks to promote the use of resources, including oil, gas, uranium, coal, biofuels, geothermal heat, flowing water, and critical minerals to strengthen the economy and reduce national deficits and debt, with the goal of achieving energy dominance.

In late March, the Natural Gas Council (NGC) wrote a letter to the White House in strong support of President Trump's goal of restoring American energy dominance and to offer recommendations on how to achieve that goal.

The NGC is comprised of five associations that make up thousands of companies which represent the industry from start to finish — commonly referred to as "from the wellhead to the burner tip." The NGC addresses a range of industry issues and concerns and issues periodic statements, reports, letters, and filings representing the unified views of the industry. Collectively, these organizations represent thousands of companies that produce, transport, and deliver natural gas to the 189 million American homes and 5.8 million businesses that use it.

Organizations that make up the NGC are the American Gas Association (AGA), American Petroleum Institute (API), Interstate Natural Gas Association of

America (INGAA), Independent Petroleum Association of America (IPAA) and the Natural Gas Supply Association (NGSA). Over the past couple of years, the NGC released the 2024/2025 *Natural Gas Market Outlook*, forecasting increased demand due to expected normal winter temperatures and highlighting robust Canadian natural gas storage as a contributing factor.

The NGC's March letter to the White House pointed out that on the president's busy "Day One," he recognized that the expansion of domestic energy infrastructure is an 'immediate and pressing priority for the protection of the United States' national and economic security.'" The NGC agrees and identified five actions that the Trump administration can take to achieve the shared goal of expanding American energy infrastructure and achieving energy dominance.

- **Recommend to Congress meaningful statutory reforms of the federal permitting process.**

The NGC letter began addressing a longtime DCA priority; namely the need for reforms to the permitting process for pipelines and other energy infrastructure. The coalition lauded the president for his "Day One" EO, "Unleashing American Energy," which states that Congress must "provide greater certainty in the Federal permitting process" and "facilitate the permitting and construction" of critical energy infrastructure, including pipelines.

"Our experience building and operating natural gas infrastructure demonstrates that Congress must reform the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Water Act, and the judicial review of federal permits to unlock the United States' abundant supplies of natural gas," the NGC letter said.

- **Revise unduly burdensome environmental regulations.**

The NGC letter pointed to the recent EO that directed the National Energy Dominance Council to identify and end practices that raise the cost of energy, including "regulatory constraints driving up the cost of reliable energy to consumers."

"Environmental stewardship is important, but the prior administration at times imposed overbroad and unduly burdensome regulations that forced higher costs on consumers and threatened the reliability of American energy. We look forward to working with the Energy Dominance Council and its agency partners to fix these regulations in a durable, legally defensible manner and ensure the United States has continued access to affordable, reliable energy."

(continued on pg. 24)



- **Restore consistency and certainty to accessing federal land.**

On Day One, the president established sound policy "to encourage energy exploration and production on Federal lands and waters, including on the Outer Continental Shelf, in order to meet the needs of our citizens and solidify the United States as a global energy leader." To effectively implement this policy, the NGC suggested that the administration restore regularity, consistency, and certainty to the leasing process for Federal lands and waters.

"Furthermore, and consistent with permitting reform, the administration and Congress should ensure that natural gas infrastructure can obtain the necessary rights of way on federal lands to expand and maintain the energy system," the NGC letter stated.

- **Establish tax reforms that encourage investing in American energy infrastructure and jobs.**

According to the NGC, the natural gas industry regularly invests in America, "but we need commonsense and predictable tax laws to better facilitate continued investments. The industry provides an estimated 3.4 million jobs and reinvests capital at a rate of more than 100% of cashflow on employees, equipment, safety, and new critical infrastructure."

Addressing specific tax items, the NGC said it's essential that "complete bonus depreciation, enhanced interest deductibility, and immediate expensing of domestic research and development (R&D) expenses are maintained, along with the current competitive corporate tax rate. These provisions will help modernize our infrastructure networks, and spur the natural gas sector to make investments now and reduce our tax liability to expand operations and hire additional workers."

- **Support prompt passage of pipeline safety reauthorization legislation.**

Addressing another key priority shared with DCA, the NGC called for a pipeline safety reauthorization bill sooner than later. "Safety is at the forefront of everything that we do," the NGC said. "To continue to advance the safety of the more than 2.8-million-mile underground pipeline system that carries fuel across the United States, Congress must pass legislation to reauthorize and fund the Office of Pipeline Safety at the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration. We ask you to support efforts in Congress to pass this essential legislation promptly."

DCA appreciates the work of the NGC and will continue to work with industry allies to achieve the shared goal of energy dominance by increasing production of natural gas and building out the infrastructure necessary to transport fuel from production wells to the homes and businesses that use it while maintaining affordability and increasing reliability.

Eleventh Hour Regulations from Biden Era Face Congressional Review Act

As described in previous editions of *DCA Insights*, it's common for "lame duck" presidents to try to finalize priority regulations before leaving office. The practice of "midnight rulemaking" turned out to be a specialty of former President Joe Biden. However, because of a law established in the 1990s to allow Congress to revisit these rules, many of Biden's last-minute rules may never hit the street.

The Congressional Review Act (CRA) allows Congress to review and potentially overturn federal regulations issued by executive agencies under certain circumstances. The CRA provides a fast-track process for Congress to disapprove regulations within 60 legislative days of their submission to Congress.

As of late March, more than 30 regulations were addressed by the CRA, and several more were lined up to face CRA scrutiny before the final deadline in late April. Among the three rules that have been overturned by CRA legislation is the infamous "methane fee," included in the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022.

The methane fee would effectively impose a tax on methane emissions from the gas and oil industry that exceed certain thresholds, which faced immediate objections from the industry and almost universally from Republicans in Congress.

At the time this edition of *DCA Insights* was written, both the House and Senate voted to overturn the methane fee regulation, advancing the measure to President Trump for his signature. The House vote was 220-206 and the Senate vote was 52-47.

"As part of his war on energy, former President Biden took radical steps to end fossil fuels during his administration which hurt the hardworking energy producers in my district who have worked diligently to increase production while fueling our allies abroad," said Rep. August Pfluger (R-Texas), a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. "Biden's burdensome natural gas tax has handicapped technological innovation, reduced supplies of affordable energy, and increased both costs and emissions."

The CRA allows Congress to pass a resolution to undo rules finalized toward the end of a president's term. If those resolutions pass and the president signs them, the rule is terminated, and agencies cannot issue a similar rule again. Fortunately, CRA resolutions to overturn the methane fee are advancing, paving the way for other reviews.

Refrigerators and Freezers

The House recently took needed steps to overturn strict energy efficiency standards for walk-in and commercial refrigerators and freezers issued late in the Biden administration. Lawmakers voted mostly along party lines on two separate CRA measures that repeal Department of Energy rules that imposed tougher efficiency standards for walk-in coolers and freezers, and another related to commercial refrigerators and freezers.

Republicans have for months said that stricter conservation standards for these appliances, used in restaurants, convenience stores, and supermarkets, would undermine the bottom line of small businesses and increase prices for consumers. Meanwhile, Democrats argued that tougher standards would lower businesses' energy bills, saving them and consumers money, and reduce strain on the energy grid.

House passage of these CRA resolutions reflects significant progress, although the Senate still needs to vote on them before being signed by the president in order to overturn these harmful and unnecessary rules. ▲



Eben M. Wyman
Principal
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DCA Testifies on Need for Pipeline Safety Legislation

Pipeline safety, especially preventing damage to underground facilities during excavation, is a longstanding priority in DCA's government relations program. On February 25, our association testified before Congress on pending pipeline safety reauthorization legislation with a sharp focus on proposed language intended to improve state pipeline safety programs. The hearing, entitled "Promoting and Improving Safety and Efficient Pipeline Infrastructure," was overseen by the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee's Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials.

In the 118th Congress, two pipeline safety bills were introduced and passed through their respective committees in the House but failed to advance to a floor vote. In fact, legislation was not even introduced in the Senate. Although pipeline safety bills have traditionally been bipartisan measures, high-profile disputes over if and how climate change should be considered in the pipeline safety debate seem to have poisoned the well following enactment of the last reauthorization (2020).

The impasse during debate of the PIPES Act of 2020 stemmed from language that mandated the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) to consider methane emissions from pipeline systems and their impacts on pipeline safety. In what was considered by some as retaliation, Republicans serving in the House Energy and Commerce (E&C) Committee pushed for inclusion of provisions addressing project permit reform

and ensuring "fuel choice" for energy consumers. While these DCA priorities would be beneficial to the industry and to American consumers, they were received as "poison pills" when it comes to including them in pipeline safety legislation. DCA and other industry leaders are working to get the conversation back on track.

The hope is to help advance a new pipeline safety bill in the 119th Congress that is similar to the T&I Committee's Pipeline Efficiency and Safety Act of 2023. That legislation included bipartisan language intended to improve state pipeline safety programs and crack down on those engaging in criminal activities when protesting events are conducted near pipeline infrastructure and related equipment located on pipeline projects. The T&I bill did not include the lightning rod provisions related to permit reform and fuel choice.

DCA's testimony called for a new pipeline safety reauthorization bill and underscored the need to include language that addressed several important issues related to underground facility damage prevention. To back up our statements and recommendations, DCA referred to the work of the Common Ground Alliance (CGA) early and often.

DCA's witness was Emanuel A. Paris, vice president of Alex E. Paris Contracting Company, located in Atlasburg, Pennsylvania. Paris, who was joined by representatives from the Interstate Natural Gas Association of America (INGAA), the Liquid Energy Pipeline Association, and the Pipeline Safety Trust provided outstanding testimony on behalf of the gas distribution construction industry.

DCA made its point straight out of the gate. "While there are many facets to pipeline safety, our industry is especially concerned with the enduring problem of damage to underground facilities during excavation activity," Paris said. "Organizations like ours and leading damage prevention organizations like the Common Ground Alliance (CGA) have long supported the concept of sharing responsibility in damage prevention. A fundamental responsibility included in this process is ensuring for accurate and timely locating and marking of subsurface facilities prior to excavation."

Because DCA has long been associated with CGA and remains very active in the organization, we pointed to CGA data to back up our claims that improvements are needed. According to CGA's *2023 Damage Information Reporting Tool (DIRT) Report*, excavators face essentially 50-50 odds of being able to legally start work on time due to utilities not providing timely locates, which obviously undermines confidence in the 811 system.

On top of that, CGA indicates that failure to locate underground facilities accurately and on time was the root cause attributed to 34% of damages to underground utilities in 2023. Records of the location of underground utilities are often inaccurate or incomplete and are sometimes unavailable to damage prevention stakeholders.

The legislation in the last congress addressed challenges to the damage prevention process by proposing improvements to state damage prevention programs. Specifically, DCA testified that state pipeline safety authorities should support and encourage adoption of several leading practices to improve their damage prevention programs. The leading practices contained in the last bill include:

- Examining and limiting exemptions to the damage prevention process, including municipal exemptions
- Requiring a "positive response" from the facility owner prior to excavation to ensure that underground facilities are marked, or that the excavation area is clear of any underground facilities
- Requiring marking of all lines and laterals, including sewer lines and laterals
- Encouraging training for locate professionals
- Encouraging the use of state-of-the-art technologies to locate underground facilities, especially geographic information systems (GIS), which offer the most detailed and prolific pipeline mapping available

DCA hit the need for better facility mapping hard and noted that the PIPES Act of 2020 began to address the issue. "The last pipeline safety reauthorization bill enacted into law, commonly referred to as the PIPES Act of 2020, included language that would require operators of gas distribution pipelines to identify and manage traceable,



Emanuel A. Paris, Alex E. Paris Contracting Company

reliable, and complete records, including maps and other drawings," Paris said. "Accurate mapping of underground utility infrastructure facilitates locating, and use of geographic information systems (GIS) is the most effective way to identify and document a wide range of data about the underground infrastructure in a given area."

According to DCA, ensuring the use of available GIS mapping technologies would clearly be the most efficient way to identify and document the exact location of underground infrastructure, and that sentiment is shared by other industries. Several letters in support of GIS mapping put together by DCA in the 118th Congress were signed on and supported by other national associations and organizations representing engineers, equipment manufacturers and distributors, technology experts, and labor unions.

DCA also noted past support for language that would hold those who engage in physical attacks on pipeline infrastructure accountable. Specifically, the House bills considered in the last congress would have established a criminal penalty of up to 10 years in prison for those who cause a defect to or disruption of a pipeline system. Importantly, the provision would include pipeline facilities under construction.

All in all, the hearing was a success, and hopefully DCA's appearance will help encourage lawmakers to move on pipeline safety reauthorization sooner rather than later. As always, DCA's Regional Advocacy Teams will be holding several "fly-in" events to help advance a new bill—one that retains the important provisions we supported in the 118th Congress. ▲

Member News



**DCA Past First Lady –
Mrs. Susan Heebner
March 12, 1940 - March 22,
2025**

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of Susan Heebner, spouse of deceased 1993 DCA Past President Royce Heebner.

Born to the late Francis Hitchcock Christopher and Elizabeth Dorr Christopher on March 12, 1940, in Rhode Island where she lived until the beginning of her senior year of high school when her father's job moved the family to Pennsylvania.

After graduating from Norristown High School she studied at Montgomery County School of Nursing, earning her degree and certification as a Registered Nurse. She went on to work as a medical-surgical nurse and later as an office nurse before changing her career to full time mother to Amy and Melissa.

She met her husband Royce towards the end of her nursing education and they were later married in 1963 at Central Schwenkfelder Church, where she also was a member. They were fortunate to spend 51 years together prior to his death in 2015.

Susan and Royce loved to travel. When their girls were young, trips to Barnegat Light, Longport and Ventnor on the Jersey Shore and Clearwater Beach, FL were favorite vacation spots. As the family grew, they were especially blessed to enjoy many trips to Disney World and Universal Studios with their children and grandchildren. In addition to the many family trips, they traveled the world as a couple; China, Australia, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, Hawaii, St. Martin, Wyoming and Colorado, were just a few of the places they made wonderful memories.

She was a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. She never missed a dance recital, band concert, musical, swim meet, football game, lacrosse match, marching band competition, or graduation for her grandchildren. She was very proud of each of them and took every opportunity to cheer them on and celebrate their achievements.

Susan was predeceased by her parents, husband Royce, brother David Christopher, in-laws, Phyllis (David)

Prizer, Lois (Leonard) Seeton and Sherman Heebner.

She is survived by her daughters; Amy Heebner (Jamie) Davis and Melissa Heebner (Brian) Kananen. Grandchildren; Christopher (Madison) Davis, Meredith (Michael) Clupper, Malinda 'Mindy' Davis, Michael (Megan) Miller and Saralynn Davis. Susan's heart grew even fuller with the arrival of her great-grandchildren; Phoenix, Sylvie, and Hazel, who brought light and joy into her life. She was especially looking forward to two new great-grandchildren this year. In addition to her children and grandchildren, she is survived by her sister, Karen (John) Barbieri, and sisters-in-law, Priscilla Christopher and Dorothy Heebner. Her circle of blessings also includes her bonus grandchildren; Antonia (Jani), Taylor (Matt), Thomas (Jamie) and bonus great granddaughter, Kalliope, as well as many nieces and nephews whom she cherished.

As was her request, a graveside service was cxsheld at Central Schwenkfelder Church on Saturday, March 29 at 11am. In lieu of flowers, the family thanks you for making donations in her memory to the Lustgarten Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research or The Trevor Project.



New VermeerOne™ Platform Connects Equipment Owners With Essential Information

Vermeer has launched VermeerOne™, a digital platform that streamlines the management, monitoring and maintenance of Vermeer equipment. The platform serves as a central hub where equipment owners can access manuals, warranty information, machine data and dealer support in one convenient interface, giving them more time for the big things that drive their business forward.

"Equipment owners need instant access to machine information and support to operate efficiently," said Jason Andringa, president and CEO of Vermeer Corporation. "VermeerOne simplifies managing equipment so our customers can focus on what matters most, getting important work done."

VermeerOne consolidates MyVermeer and the existing Vermeer Telematics portal into a single platform, delivering enhanced functionality for both connected and non-connected machines. The system offers specialized benefits tailored to each equipment type and configuration.

For all Vermeer equipment, VermeerOne delivers easy access to essential documentation and resources:

- Operator, maintenance and parts manuals
- Equipment registration and build specifications
- Warranty policy details
- Fleet management
- Standard planned maintenance intervals
- Dealer contact information
- Team access management tools

For those enrolled in the Vermeer Confidence Plus® asset protection program, the platform adds enhanced

visibility to program-specific maintenance services, purchase history and remaining resources that are part of their protection plan.

"VermeerOne gives equipment owners the information they need, when and where they need it," said Brianne Schulte, Vermeer vice president of strategy, risk, information technology and financial planning. "By connecting customers to their machines and their dealers, we're enabling them to make informed decisions that can help boost productivity. The platform also creates the ability for customers in new territories to have a local Vermeer dealer seamlessly support their equipment through the VermeerOne system, maintaining continuity of service wherever they operate."

Connected machines, those equipped with telematics control units and data sharing, gain additional capabilities through Vermeer Fleet, which is fully integrated into VermeerOne. The platform provides Base Fleet features at no additional cost, including:

- Real-time machine location tracking
- Machine hours monitoring
- Operational status updates
- Fault code reporting
- Geofencing capabilities



SURPRISINGLY SIMPLE SOLUTIONS

Learn more about the TracStar iSeries line of fusion machines.

THE FUSIONGUIDE™ CONTROL SYSTEM available on TracStar® iSeries machines provides an easy-to-follow workflow tailored to each operator's experience. Integrated software leads users through the fusion, ensuring consistent joints while the built-in DataLogger® simultaneously documents every fusion joint on the job for storage, analysis, and sharing.

MMI McELROY

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"The Fleet features in VermeerOne transform how our customers manage their equipment," added Schulte. "By providing essential data directly to owners, we're helping them optimize utilization, respond quickly to issues and plan more effectively."

For equipment owners with advanced fleet management requirements, the VermeerOne Premium Fleet subscription delivers comprehensive analytics and insights for fleet-wide operations and individual machines. This subscription includes all Base Fleet features plus these enhanced capabilities:

- Machine location history
- Machine geofencing capabilities
- Machine fuel usage monitoring
- Product line performance data
- Fleet-level utilization metrics
- Start and stop average times tracking
- Historical and full fault code history
- Asset tracking capabilities
- Notifications for when a machine has moved more than a certain amount of feet or miles within a range of hours

These enhanced capabilities allow owners to optimize machine and fleet performance through data-driven decisions. Premium Fleet subscribers receive a consolidated dashboard with detailed performance

reports, machine analysis, insights and API integration to incorporate equipment data into other business management platforms. The availability of specific data points varies by machine type and location since different equipment serves different purposes and functions.

Existing MyVermeer users can access VermeerOne using their current login credentials. Current Vermeer Telematics Silver/Edge subscribers will automatically transition to Premium Fleet within VermeerOne with all existing features and capabilities preserved. Equipment owners may need to create a new Vermeer account to access historical telematics data for their machinery. The platform is compatible with all registered Vermeer equipment, including machines purchased through auctions or non-Vermeer dealers. This allows all Vermeer owners to benefit from streamlined access to essential information and support resources.

VermeerOne is designed to accommodate operations of all sizes, from owners of a single unit to those managing large fleets of 100+ machines. The intuitive interface works across devices, allowing users to manage their equipment from the office or in the field. The platform also features an embedded help center, providing immediate access to a comprehensive library of support articles and automated assistance for users.

To learn more about VermeerOne or to get assistance with transitioning to the new platform, please contact your [local Vermeer dealer](#). ▲



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DCA NEWS is a bi-monthly publication of
Distribution Contractors Association
101 West Renner Road, Suite 460
Richardson, Texas 75082
972-680-0261
www.dcaweb.org



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