

## HEA 1002

The number of high school students going to college has dropped 8% from 2019-2022 according to sources such as PBS.org and Fortune.com. Many young adults are choosing to go straight into the workforce instead of continuing with a college. Indiana has recently passed a bill called, HEA 1002, to help these young adults choosing this career path equipping high schools with more work-based learning. At the surface level, this bill seems like a great way to promote work-based learning with apprenticeships and internships, however, it may be problematic to the Indiana Building Trades Unions if it is not handled properly. A quote from indianacapitalchronicle.com states, "Hoosiers need a credential beyond a high school diploma — like a certification or degree — to succeed and thrive in the economy and the workforce." One of the biggest things that makes the Trades Unions so successful is their good education through the apprenticeship. If kids get training and certifications before turning 18, because they are not eligible for the union apprenticeship yet, they can go out and bypass the union do their own work or they may already be committed to the company they have been working for. I think that this bill can be very useful to the unions for recruitment, but without a few key things it may be bad. Indiana's Building Trades Unions need to fight for implementation of Union based classes in high school, be sure to attend the required career fairs, and get their name out more through marketing at school events.

In the bill HEA 1002, it requires high schools to offer some sort of course sequence that utilize the new grants. With that, the Trades Unions need to sponsor some of these and fight to implement Union specific classes. One class that is especially important is labor history. The labor history class needs to emphasize why the union exists and show them what happens when unions do not exist. People get put in extremely harsh conditions with no baseline and agreed

upon rules. Many people fought to have unions to get treated fairly and most of today's generation does not fully understand the importance of having unions. Why pay dues? Why be controlled? These are common questions I hear from high schoolers and college students because they do not understand. With proper education of labor history, it will draw people to want to become a part of the union and seek out being a part of something bigger than themselves. The union also needs to ask the school for other classes such as intro level blue collar courses such as carpentry, electrical classes, or a class that offers a little bit of it all. This will allow kids to dabble in the different types of trades that they otherwise have no access to. Students may find it intriguing, thus it can help them to consider it as a future career. Unions should also ask to sponsor these classes with left over materials and donate them to the schools. This will really expose the kids to what the union is. Seeing that unions are nice enough to sponsor the classes will catch the attention of good people that want to join good community driven organizations. It will be a great way to get the Trade Union's names out there to younger kids that may not know about it.

Another nuance in the bill is that high schools must hold career fairs during school hours. If all the Trade Unions show out in big ways, it will be a great way to get kids interested. Come with contests such as who can name this tool with things like pipe benders, channel locks, wire crimpers, or who can cut this 500-size wire without put the cutters on the ground etc. Things that kids have never seen or done before will draw their attention. Second, give out plenty of information. Plenty of cards and pamphlets should be available, but also place personable people in the booths that can give information on the spot. Speaking from experience, you lose attention in a company or college very fast when the person behind the booth is on their phone and uninterested themselves. Kids that know they do not want to go to college will feel appreciated if

someone is there to show them other paths that lead to success. Show them successful people who become public officials and people that have great retirements from the many benefits that the union has to offer to their employees. People are drawn to added benefits and many high school kids do not know about the importance of retirement plans and insurance benefits the Unions offer. Even the slightest bit of interest during the career fair day may spark someone to try out the new *labor history class* or *intro carpentry class* (that the unions need to push for) in school, and it can lead someone down the path of enrolling in the union apprenticeship program out of high school.

Lastly, marketing is huge. I graduated high school two years ago and never heard a word about a Trade Union job. Not in any fairs, career calculators, or from any teachers. With bill HEA 1002, this is going to be the perfect way to get the Trade Union name out in school. T-shirts need to be handed out at the career fairs, banners can be purchased to be hung in gymnasiums, they need to go the extra mile. The bill also proposes this, "Requires the department to establish and maintain an online platform that allows teachers to access and share information regarding connecting daily classroom lessons with innovations in workplace practices and postsecondary education research" (iga.in.gov 2023). Getting connected with this website so teachers must share the Union name and progress developments in the class will be huge. Not such a college driven environment will allow for kids to feel confident enough to ask questions about it and not feel forced to go to college. Seeing a banner at a football game, then seeing someone with a local 697 t-shirt on, then hearing about it in classroom settings will normalize Trade Unions being a lucrative career path. Highschool kids not hearing anything about Union jobs being an option for a career will hurt the availability of workers, and eventually it will become hard to find people that want to go Union. However, with these actions listed above, it will open the flood gates to

people wanting to get into the Trade Unions since their eyes have been opened to the important things they do.

All in all, the Unions will have to be very proactive with the passing of the bill. If no actions are taken, kids are going to be able to bypass the apprenticeship in high school and gain certifications before graduating. However, if the Trade Unions market more through being more present in schools and get their name on things like banners and t-shirts kids are going to become more familiar with the idea of them. They also need to be more present in the classroom, so kids understand why the Union is crucial to the workforce and do not end up going to non-union places that will offer credentials first in high school. If the Trades Unions push for classes about labor history, show the importance, and the reasons for the Unions in the school setting, then this can be a very successful campaign to draw workers to work for Indiana's Building Trades Unions.