

Workforce Development

NECA contractors, both small businesses and major corporations, contribute approximately \$300 million annually to our apprenticeship and training programs across the country. NECA is proud of its commitment to training its members' employees to build the gold standard of the registered apprenticeship program. For nearly 80 years, NECA employers contributed billions of dollars to apprenticeship funds in the electrical industry to ensure we have the industry's highest-skilled workforce. This investment earns \$1.44 back for every dollar toward apprentices in a registered apprenticeship program.

Congress should promote existing skilled apprenticeship programs as a debt-free pathway to economic growth. According to the Department of Labor, 94 percent of people who graduate from registered apprenticeship programs are employed upon completion. The average starting salary for a registered apprenticeship graduate has risen to approximately \$80,000 annually. Yet, according to the most recent data, only 0.3 percent of the overall workforce in America have completed an apprenticeship.

In January 2026, the Department of Labor announced the \$145 million Pay-for-Performance Incentive Payments Program, a significant investment aimed at reaching the national goal of one million active apprentices. NECA continues to lead this expansion, ensuring that the next generation of workers has access to the highest-quality workforce development opportunities.

KEY POINTS

Meeting the labor shortage. There is a serious need to build the next generation of skilled electricians. Nearly 70 percent of our supervisor roles are staffed by Baby Boomers, with the average age of a journeyman electrician hovering around 53 years old. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, about 81,200 openings for electricians are projected each year over the 2026–2036 decade.

Apprentices earn an excellent wage and benefits package during their apprenticeship. The salary of a typical first-year apprentice graduate would rank among the top ten college majors with the highest starting salaries. The average starting salary of an apprentice graduate is \$80,000 per year, with the ability to earn over \$100,000 as they advance.

NECA ASKS

Congress should codify and streamline standards for registered apprenticeships, youth apprenticeship, and pre-apprenticeship programs, including requirements for apprenticeship agreements and program registration. This would ensure consistency in quality standards, worker protections, and equal opportunity for all individuals, while increasing diversity in high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand occupations.

Congress should support grants to assist in creating and sustaining pre-apprenticeship programs that serve racial minorities, women, military veterans, and individuals from impoverished census tracts. As of 2026, women still represent only about 4.4 percent of the electrical workforce, and increasing this diversity is critical to solving the labor shortage.

A tax credit should be made available to companies that employ apprentices enrolled in a federal or state-registered apprentice program.

Congress should establish a training tax credit for construction apprentices that would incentivize people to join an apprenticeship earlier than the current average of 29. An annual tax credit of \$1,500 should be available to any apprentice under 25, while those over 25 would receive a \$1,000 credit.



The **National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA)** is the voice of the \$270 billion electrical construction industry that brings power, light, and communication technology to buildings and communities across North America. NECA's national office and 118 local chapters advance the industry through advocacy, education, research, and standards development.