

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
United States House of Representatives
2462 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC, 20515

January 23, 2024

Dear Representative Foxx,

STI/SPFA would like to express our support for your legislation, A Stronger Workforce for America Act ([H.R. 6655](#)), to expand skill & career development to meet the employment needs of critical industries.

STI/SPFA is a leading trade association representing businesses in the steel plate fabricated products industry across the country. Founded in 1916, our members are manufacturers of steel storage tanks, pressure vessels, and piping and pipelines used in the petrochemical, power generation, food, drug, fuel, wastewater, and water transmission industries.

As the steel tank industry is impacted by the nationwide workforce shortage, we remain concerned about our members' ability to effectively service the needs of the wide swath of critical sectors covered by our products. In recent years, highly specialized positions have become harder to fill as interest in vocational and trade schools has dwindled to record lows, which not only undermines American manufacturers but also creates a "skills gap" unable to be filled solely through employer-led initiatives.

According to a [2023 report from the U.S. Census Bureau](#), the manufacturing industry has faced an ongoing labor crisis that is projected to result in 2.1 million unfulfilled jobs by 2030 due to a lack of skilled labor. Even more concerning, this projection was made prior to COVID-19, which resulted in approximately 1.4 million manufacturing job losses. In the iron and steel industry, employment is only expected to grow by **0.4%** between 2021-2031, indicating an inability of existing workforce training programs to attract the necessary talent to facilitate long-term growth.

Through A Stronger Workforce For America Act, STI/SPFA applauds the legislation's efforts to address this growing skills gap by:

- Prioritizing employer-led initiatives to provide workers with skill sets to fill jobs in critical industries
- Emphasizes the importance of work-based learning programs for youth

- Strengthens workforce education programs at community colleges to align with in-demand jobs

Steel tanks play a vital role in preserving critical supply infrastructure by maintaining the storage and distribution of food, water, fuel, and chemicals. With a market size of \$12 billion spread across 800 companies in the United States, the steel tank industry remains a pivotal component of the manufacturing supply chain. As such, STI/SPFA supports this legislation's efforts to bolster the skills and strengthen pathways to economic opportunity for American workers in these critical industries.

We appreciate your leadership in promoting greater labor security for domestic manufacturers and look forward to working with you to ensure this important piece of legislation is passed and signed into law in the near future.

Sincerely,

Tim O'Toole
Executive Vice President
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