



ON THE LEVEL

Monthly Newsletter of the Temple Area Builders Association

March 2017

Know who you're doing business with?

When you do business with a fellow TABA Member, you know who you are dealing with. Your mutual success is important to the viability of our industry and of our Association.

Call on a TABA Member first! Not sure if they are a TABA Member? Start your search in our Member directory at www.tahb.org.

Upcoming Event Calendar

April 13	TABA Crawfish Boil @ Lamar Outdoor Advertising
May 11	TABA Parade of Homes Kickoff Party @ Dead Fish Grill
May 12-14 & 19-21	TABA Parade of Homes in Temple, Belton, & Salado
June 23	TABA Golf Tournament @ Sammons Golf Links
July 14	TABA Member Appreciation Cookout @ Overlook Pavilion, Lake Belton

"A strong Association is essential to our collective effort to support housing affordability and a favorable regulatory environment. Encourage those you do business with to join TABA today and advance our efforts!"

*- Megan Kiella,
2017 TABA President*



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Congress Strikes Down OSHA Recordkeeping Rule

In a victory for NAHB and the small business community, the Senate today passed legislation [approved by the House earlier this month](#) that will force the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to reverse a recent recordkeeping rule that would needlessly harm small employers.

“NAHB led the charge along with other industry groups to work with Congress to roll back this regulatory overreach,” said NAHB Chairman Granger MacDonald. “OSHA’s rule would subject millions of small businesses to citations for paperwork violations, while doing nothing to improve worker health or safety.”

NAHB vigorously opposed OSHA for overstepping its authority by unilaterally extending the explicit six-month statute of limitations on recordkeeping violations to five years.

The Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 established that employers must keep accurate records of employee injuries and illnesses for five years and that OSHA has six months to cite an employer for a violation. Subsequent court rulings upheld the six-month statute of limitations.

Nonetheless, in a clear attempt to circumvent congressional authority and in spite of the court rulings, OSHA proceeded with its rulemaking, which went into effect on Jan. 18.

When President Trump signs the legislation into law, OSHA will still be able to issue a citation for recordkeeping paperwork violations up to six months after they occurred and employers will still have the exact same obligation to record injuries as they always had.

The difference: OSHA will no longer be able to play “gotcha” by issuing a citation five years after the occurrence, which would do nothing to minimize workplace hazards but would subject small businesses to needless fines and excessive paperwork requirements. The legislation passed by a vote of 50-48.

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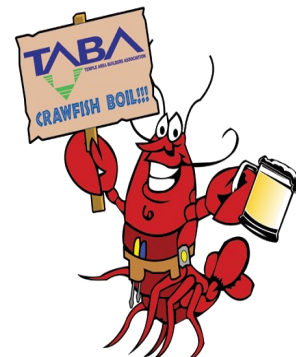
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2017 Parade of Homes Kickoff Party - May 11

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Eye On The Economy Feature Article

Immigration and its Economic Impacts

Elliot Eisenberg, Ph.D.

Recently, Senator Tom Cotton from Arkansas and Senator David Perdue from Georgia introduced legislation aiming to reduce legal immigration to slightly more than 500,000/year from the current rate of one million/year. The explanation given by both senators was that reducing the number of immigrants would shrink the pool of labor, thus raising wages, and hopefully encouraging some of the many Americans who have quit the labor force to return. While sounding plausible, the data does not support this position. Moreover, reduced immigration will bring the US perilously close to a situation it has never seen: near-zero population growth.

Per an exhaustive study carried out by the US National Academy of Sciences, immigration does not drive down wages. Rather, immigration was found to have a “very small” and short-term effect on native-born workers lacking a high school degree. Another study that looked at non-European immigration into Denmark between 1991 and 2008 found that immigrants didn’t reduce wages, and instead freed natives to do more agreeable work. And when only high-tech immigration is analyzed, at worst, studies find that wages of American computer workers and scientists are depressed by up to 10%, but the overall economy is better off by boosting innovation and reducing prices for consumers.

While somewhat counterintuitive, these studies demonstrate that rather than taking jobs performed by natives, immigrants create new employment opportunities, and along the way, can push the natives into higher paying jobs. The mistaken belief that immigrants reduce employment opportunities for Americans is based on a false notion that there is a fixed amount of work to be done, and that job gains made by immigrants come at the expense of natives who are displaced.

In addition, immigrants often bring skills that are in great demand. For example, at present, there is a shortage of occupational and physical therapists, nurses, construction workers, engineers, metal workers, etc. However, wages in these professions do not appear to be rising substantially faster than those in occupations where labor shortages are less severe. This is because more construction and metal workers simply cannot be found, regardless of the wage offered. Thus, employers have been forced to cut back on production because of a dearth of skilled labor. This situation helps no one.

Separately, ponder this: on average, the working-age population grew by 1.4% per year between the years 1965 and 2015, and economic growth averaged 3%. Assuming current fertility and immigration rates, the working-age population will grow just 0.3%/year between now and 2037. With only 500,000 immigrants per year, the working-age population will grow by just 0.1%/year. And with no immigration, the working-age population shrinks by 0.1%/year. Under these conditions, we will be lucky to see annual GDP growth of 1.5%/year, not to mention declining house prices. House prices would be expected to fall in cities in counties with declining populations, as the number of buyers would progressively decline.

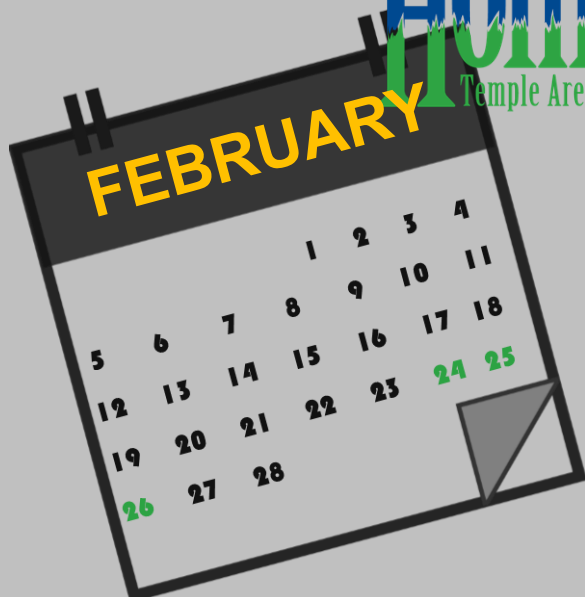
While many Americans fear that immigrants -- in particular illegal immigrants -- threaten their employment opportunities and wages, in almost all situations that is not the case. Frequently, immigrants perform demanding physical work that Americans prefer not to do, and even when that is not so, immigrants often have skills that are in short supply. Lastly, in an economy that is rapidly aging and slowly growing, immigration is the key to population growth. That growth will allow us to avoid a host of painful problems, including declining property values and rising tax burdens that we would be wise to avoid.

Elliot Eisenberg, Ph.D. is President of GraphsandLaughs, LLC and can be reached at Elliot@graphsandlaughs.net. His daily 70 word economics and policy blog can be seen at www.econ70.com. You can subscribe to have the blog delivered directly to your email by visiting the website or by texting the word “BOWTIE” to 22828.



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Trump to NAHB Chairman: 'We're Going to Make Home Building Great Again'

NAHB Chairman Granger MacDonald had an important message for President Trump on Tuesday. And Trump had a very positive message for home builders.

MacDonald, who was in Washington, D.C. for the week to attend meetings on Capitol Hill, had just been invited to the White House to attend a ceremony in which Trump would sign an executive order directing the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to begin [rolling back the controversial "waters of the United States" rule](#).

"I looked right at him and I said, 'When you talked to our board in August, [you promised that you would fix this](#). On behalf of our 140,000 members, thank you.' And he said to me, 'I bet you thought it would be at the end of four years and not right away, right? We're going to make home building great again.'"

MacDonald is glad he spoke up. "When you only get five or 10 seconds to say something, when you see the opportunity, you've got to run at it as straight as you can," he said.

The ceremony also gave MacDonald an opportunity to talk to Vice President Mike Pence, who as governor of Indiana had productive relationships with members of the [Indiana Builders Association](#). "The vice president is a very common-sense individual, and he is definitely a friend of home building," MacDonald said.

While the group waited for the president to arrive, MacDonald struck up a conversation with EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt. "It was a good, long visit," MacDonald said, in which he emphasized builders' respect for the environment, but also the need for cost-effective, common-sense regulation that does not hurt small businesses or curb economic growth.

These conversations, even brief ones, speak to the value of NAHB membership, MacDonald said. "When the president says he's going to make home building great again, that's important.

"We are at the White House within the first 40 days of this administration," he pointed out. "Whether our members support Trump or not, we are right in the middle of it, where we need to be. You are either at the table or being served on the menu. We are at the table."

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Our current members are our most valuable recruitment tools! Are you encouraging the people that you do business with to join TABA?

There is strength in numbers!

If our industry doesn't have a strong voice, your business will be impacted one way or another. This could mean less infrastructure development or it could mean more regulation and higher fees.

Either way, your ability to grow your business could be limited if you don't have an advocate in the halls of government.

TABA not only provides networking and marketing opportunities that help you promote your business, we also navigate the political waters to help provide a pro-business environment.

We encourage you to engage your business associates, and have them join TABA so we can continue to move our industry forward!

Contact Kacie at kacie@tahb.org or 254.773.0445 for more information on how to refer your business associates, or to pass on leads regarding prospective members!



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Job Growth Continues for Builders and Remodelers

The count of unfilled jobs in the construction sector was below trend for the second consecutive month, as hiring has accelerated in the industry. According to the BLS [Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey](#) (JOLTS) and NAHB analysis, the number of open construction sector jobs (on a seasonally adjusted basis) came in at 147,000 in January. The cycle high was 238,000 set in July of last year.

The open position rate (job openings as a percent of total employment) for January was 2.1%. On a smoothed twelve-month moving average basis, the open position rate for the construction sector held steady at 2.7%, near the cycle high.

The overall trend for open construction jobs has been increasing since the end of the Great Recession. This is consistent with survey data indicating that access to [labor remains a top business challenge](#) for builders. However, a recent increase in hiring has reduced the current level of unfilled jobs in the sector. In fact, the hiring rate in December and January, 5.9% and 5.6% respectively, mark the strongest two months since late 2014.

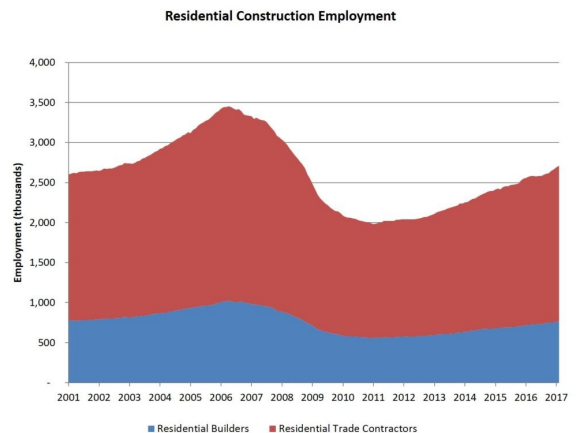
The construction sector hiring rate, as measured on a twelve-month moving average basis, increased to 5.1% in January. The twelve-month moving average for layoffs was steady (2.7%), remaining in a range set last fall. Quits have been rising recently, increasing to 2.3% at the start of 2017.

Monthly employment data for February 2017 (the employment count data from the BLS establishment survey are published one month ahead of the JOLTS data) indicate that home builder and remodeler employment continued to grow at a fast pace, increasing by 18,900. The February gains continue the improvement in place since November that followed a period of hiring weakness early in 2016. The 6-month moving average of job gains for residential construction has now increased to a more robust gain of 18,300 a month.

Residential construction employment now stands at 2.707 million, broken down as 767,000 builders and 1.94 million residential specialty trade contractors.

Over the last 12 months home builders and remodelers have added 136,000 jobs on a net basis. Since the low point of industry employment following the Great Recession, residential construction has gained 724,600 positions.

In February, the unemployment rate for construction workers stood at 6.5% on a seasonally adjusted basis. The unemployment rate for the construction occupation had been on a general decline since reaching a peak rate of 22% in February 2010, although it has leveled off in the 6% to 7% range since the middle of 2016.



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Trump Budget Proposes \$6 Billion Cut to HUD

President Trump unveiled his fiscal 2018 budget plan today that proposes sharp increases to defense spending along with corresponding cuts to scores of non-defense discretionary programs.

Notably, the administration puts HUD's funding at \$40.7 billion, down \$6.2 billion or 13.2% from the \$46.9 billion in 2017.

It is important to note that this is the first step in the budget process. The president's budget is meant to serve as a marker, but it is up to the Congress to write and submit a federal budget. Lawmakers are expected to take several months to go through the appropriations process, and the final budget approved by Congress is likely to be significantly different than the White House draft.

Nevertheless, the administration's budget will be debated by lawmakers. The White House budget would eliminate the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, which provides communities with resources to address a wide range of urban renewal projects. The CDBG program received \$3 billion in funding for 2017.

The budget would also eliminate the HOME Investment Partnership and Choice Neighborhoods programs.

HOME received \$950 million in funding for 2017. The program is the largest federal block grant to state and local governments designed exclusively to create affordable housing for low-income households. Many multifamily builders often use the HOME program to fund developments in conjunction with the Low Income Housing Tax Credit.

The proposed budget would provide \$130 million, an increase of \$20 million, for the mitigation of lead-based paint and other hazards.

The HUD budget lacked specific figures regarding Project Based Section 8 housing.

The budget also includes significant cuts to the Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the departments of Labor and Agriculture.

Again, this is the first salvo in what will be a long, drawn-out process. As lawmakers focus on budget deliberations in the coming weeks and months, NAHB will work aggressively to remove any provisions that will harm housing and push for elements that will help small businesses and the housing community.

Optimistic Consumers in March

Consumer confidence, reported by the Conference Board, increased in March. Consumers were very optimistic about both the current situation and the near term outlook.

The Consumer Confidence Index increased to 125.6 in March, from 116.1 in February. Both the present situation index and the expectations index reached post-recession highs. The present situation index rose from 134.4 to 143.1 and the expectations index increased from 103.9 to 113.8.

Consumers were quite optimistic about current business conditions. There were 32.2% of respondents rating business conditions "good", 3.9 percentage points more than last month. The shares of respondents reporting business conditions "bad" and "normal" decreased by 0.5 and 3.4 percentage points, respectively.

Additional information about expectations of business conditions is available [here](#).

NAHB Officers Discuss Key Regulatory Issues with EPA Administrator

NAHB Senior Officers held a productive meeting with Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt today to seek ways to make regulations more cost-effective without undermining their intent. Discussions focused on several key issues for the home building community, including the waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) rule, lead paint and stormwater regulation.

Nearly 25% of the cost of a new single-family home is attributable to regulation. It's important, said NAHB Chairman Granger MacDonald, that EPA consider the impact of federal regulations on existing state and local government requirements, as well as on small businesses.

As EPA carries out President Trump's regulatory streamlining directives, NAHB urged the agency to focus not only on new rules but also on opportunities to revoke or revise existing ones.

A Positive First Step

NAHB said the president's [executive order on WOTUS](#) is a positive first step toward a more sensible rule. NAHB offered to work with EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to craft a clear, defensible rule that is fair, balanced and meets the needs of our members.

NAHB agrees with Pruitt that any future rule must limit federal jurisdiction based on congressional intent and Supreme Court rulings. We added that regulation is best handled at the state and local level, and encouraged EPA to explore ways to remove hurdles that have prevented many states from running their own wetland permitting programs.

Regarding EPA's [Lead Renovation, Repair, and Painting](#) (RRP) Rule, NAHB urged Pruitt to:

- Conduct a revised cost-benefit analysis that acknowledges that no lead testing kit has come to market.
- Respond to the congressional call for EPA to address the lack of a qualifying test kit, including an explanation of how the agency will resolve the issue.
- Limit the scope of RRP coverage by reducing the housing stock covered to homes built before 1960, which have a greatest likelihood of containing lead-based paint.
- Revise EPA's regulation amending the RRP renovator refresher training requirements: It penalizes those who choose online training and has created confusion in the industry.

EPA is reviewing the RRP rule through the Regulatory Flexibility Act and NAHB is urging the agency to include these actions in the final report due out shortly.

Federal vs. State Roles

NAHB said it is vital to reverse federal overreach in the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System stormwater management program. NAHB requested a follow-up meeting with Pruitt's staff to clarify federal vs. state roles. Specifically, we would like EPA to:

- Turn its [recent template for single-family homes](#) in large subdivisions into a streamlined small lot permit. This would further simplify the program and dramatically reduce compliance costs for these low-risk sites.
- Make it clear that the Permit Quality Review "report cards" that states receive from EPA offices are not legally binding. These reviews are suggestions, not requirements, and should not be seen as federal mandates to adopt stricter stormwater limits.

Also attending the EPA meeting were Second Vice Chairman Greg Ugalde, Third Vice Chairman Dean Mon, Immediate Past Chairman Ed Brady, CEO Jerry Howard and other senior NAHB staff. First Vice Chairman Randy Noel was on Capitol Hill [testifying on regulatory reform](#).

"It went very well," said a pleased Ugalde after the meeting ended. "I think we are going to be able to build upon the positive relationships our staff has created with the EPA and take it to the next level. EPA Administrator Pruitt listened very carefully to all our points and has instructed his staff to work closely with us going forward."



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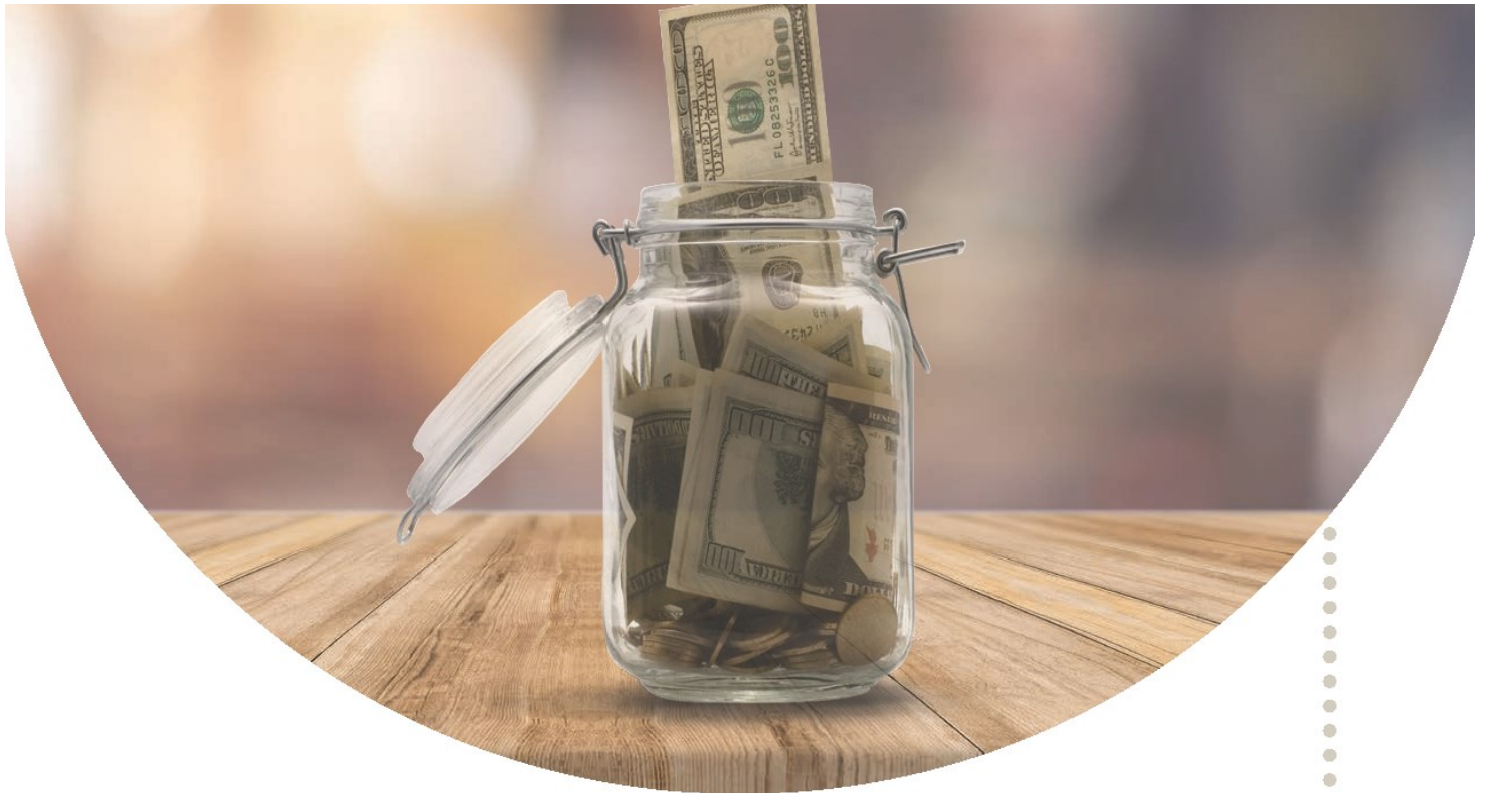


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TABA Membership Spike Club Roster - Top 10

Jim Howe -- Belfair Development -- 559 Credits

Christopher Butler -- Jubilee Homes -- 542 Credits

John Kiella -- Kiella Homebuilders -- 487 Credits

Jason Carothers -- Carothers Executive Homes -- 370 Credits

Linda Strickel -- Bonded Builders Warranty Group -- 276 Credits

Charles Amos -- Amos Electrical Supply -- 271 Credits

Curtis Lockey -- Lochridge-Priest -- 214 Credits

Dean Winkler -- CRW Construction -- 166 Credits

John Howe -- Omega Builders -- 131 Credits

Robbie Johnson -- Stillwater Custom Homes -- 127 Credits

What is the Spike Club?

The NAHB Spike Club is composed of all of the individual members and employees of members in local associations who have attained Spike status.

It is a vehicle to recognize these members for their outstanding achievements in member recruitment and retention in their local home builders association.

How do I earn Spike Credits?

Individuals earn Spike Credits by sponsoring new members, and by those new members retaining their membership.

Spike credits have the following values: 1.0 credit for new Builder or Associate members and 0.5 credit for new council members, Affiliate memberships, and Builder and Associate renewal memberships.

What is one example of a Spike Club perk?

Other than bragging rights... Spikes can attend the NAHB Spike Party & Directors' Reception held each year during the International Builders' Show. The Spike Party & Director's Reception recognizes and honors Spikes across the country for their continued commitment to membership development.

To qualify to attend the Spike Party & Director's Reception, each Spike must have a minimum of 6 credits and must earn at least one new member credit between November 1 2016 - October 31 2017.

Membership News & Announcements

Do you have an announcement about your member company that you would like to share with the broader TABA membership?

Contact TABA at kacie@tahb.org or 254-773-0445 to share

Membership Recruitment Contest

For every 2 members (Builders or Associates) you recruit between now and July, your name goes into TWO separate drawings.

One drawing will be held during the TAB Membership Committee meeting in Summer 2017.

The second drawing will be held at the TABA office at the end of July.

Winners will be notified by phone and you don't have to be present to win!

Contact Us

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(254) 773-0445

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Visit us on the web at www.tahb.org