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Plenary Session: An Apollo Project for Energy Independence

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Thank you. I get the opportunity to be the last speaker today. Often, when I am introduced, people say, "What is a sheet metal worker?" I know there are probably a lot of you who are asking that question. We are not to be confused with steel workers, who produce steel. We take steel - sheet steel - and we bend it, cut it, weld it and fabricate equipment and materials, and then we install the equipment and materials for heating and ventilating systems. If you have a home that is heated or air-conditioned: that's us. We probably fabricated your furnace. We probably fabricated the ductwork to that furnace. If you have air conditioning in your home or in the building where you work: that's us. We also work on air pollution and dust-control systems. So, as you can see, we are not to be confused with people who just meddle between the sheets, because that's not what we do.

I'm going to talk a little bit about what we do, because I know very few people really know - outside of our industry - what we actually do. It reminds me of the current administration, to some extent; most of what I'll be talking about, I don't believe they know anything about. And I can say that when Harry Truman ran for President of the United States against Dewey, his model - or what he had to say about the "do-nothing" Congress - was just exactly that. I will refer to the current administration in my remarks as the "know-nothing" administration.

As I have said, sheet-metal workers perform work in building construction trades, including fabrication, installation and maintenance of building environmental systems, which are a part of the whole building operating systems. Building operating systems are major users of energy. An estimated 25 - 30 percent of the total United States energy consumption is consumed in buildings. This is an expenditure of about 210 billion dollars for buildings, which is split at about 120 billion for residences and 90 billion for non-residences.

In efforts to reduce this percentage, building owners, property managers and the like will need to take steps to install the latest in energy-efficient technologies to reduce their overall energy consumption. By using highly-trained (that's us) and certified technicians registered through apprenticeship programs, energy costs can be reduced drastically. That's something the administration knows nothing about. Our training programs are certified by the US Department of Labor, Bureau of Apprenticeship Training, and our

technicians are schooled in the arts and sciences, of energy-management and building environmental systems. If you bought a car today, you would take it to a certified mechanic for regular oil-changes and tune-ups to keep its fuel-efficiency and overall performance at peak condition. It's the same with building operating systems. You need to have certified professionals installing, maintaining, commissioning, and operating those systems to keep overall performance at peak condition.

The Apollo Project addresses the major issues regarding energy independence and involves all the major stakeholders. Energy independence is something, again, our "do-nothing" or "know-nothing" administration knows nothing about. With the advent of new energy-efficient technologies, the SMWIA and our industry have the resources to supply those new initiatives in building operating systems with the expertise needed to install, operate and maintain them correctly. Energy-efficiency requires skilled labor for better operation and maintenance in every facet of the building community. Training and education of the technicians who install, commission, operate and maintain those systems are important components to complete the energy-saving cycle.

The Apollo Project recognizes the need for renewed investment on the labor side of the energy issue. It brings to light the problems of building owners and property managers installing the latest, most up-to-date HVAC systems available. But those systems are proving worthless - absolutely worthless - without certified technicians operating and maintaining them. If energy-efficient environmental systems are installed, maintained and operated by skilled workers, the savings on energy expenditures in the U. S. would amount to 25 billion annually. Nice piece of change.

The improvement in energy-efficiency offers a potential solution for reducing U. S. dependence on global energy resources. Now, this is something the administration - the "know-nothing" administration - does know something about. They know how to go out and send our people to war - our boys, men and women to war - to accomplish their objective of what *they* call energy independence. It's not what I call energy independence.

Insuring that skilled technicians are available to install the latest technologies must command the same level of priority as providing other needed resources. Under-investing in human capital is counter-productive, and serves to undermine the committed financial investment in energy-efficient technologies.

Through our 165 training centers across the United States and Canada, workers entering the trade receive education in advanced math, physics and sciences that apply to their work. They learn specialized skills in testing, adjusting and balancing of building environmental systems. We certify system-commissioning technicians who verify and document the performance of building operating systems, assuring these systems meet design intent. We currently are training and certifying approximately 24,000 apprentices and journeypersons devoting 55 million dollars per year of private industry capital to increase technician enterprise in HVAC and building environmental systems.

To increase market penetration of today's energy-efficient technology, it is vital that we educate building owners and managers about what we have to offer. Education of the end—user must be a part of the mission for a more energy-efficient and manageable US market. Building owners and property managers should demand the latest, most up-to-date HVAC systems available. But those systems will prove worthless unless highly skilled and certified technicians are available to install, balance, commission, operate and maintain them.

Business owners cite the two most important reasons for completing an HVAC energy retro-fit is greater energy efficiency and lower operating and maintenance costs. Yet the majority of building owners have not instituted energy management programs. In 2001, the market opportunity for HVAC energy retro-fits was estimated to be 180 billion dollars - that's not million, that's billion - in the United States, with an incremental revenue opportunity per year through 2004, for our trade, calculated to 500 to 700 million dollars. There are millions of hours available in the current HVAC energy retro-fit market large enough to support thousands of additional full-time workers in good-paying union jobs. If energy management programs, by way of HVAC energy retro-fits are implemented, employers in this industry could realize a 40 percent increase in business volume. Programs such as those provided by our union and industry should be the standard by which all programs are measured.

The Institute for America's Future is on the right track. In proposing an Apollo-like goal for efficiency, energy-efficiency and independence, the sheet metal workers and air conditioning industry offers its HVAC expertise. And we say, to each and every one of you, we will be in the fight until it's over. We support this program, and we're glad to be here today and have the opportunity for you to listen and learn something about sheet metal workers. Thank you.