

San Francisco's Community Jobs Law Swings Into Effect

By Joshua Arce and Utuma Belfrey

Approximately one year ago, Supervisor John Avalos introduced a new local hiring law, supported by the most diverse coalition of community advocates, workers, labor leaders, contractors, and policy makers that San Francisco has ever seen. (See “Wanted: Community Jobs Policy For San Francisco,” *RP&E*, Fall 2010).

The San Francisco Local Hiring Policy for Construction became law on Christmas Day, a timeline remarkably short for legislation of that scale but reflective of the historic levels of unemployment in San Francisco's low-income communities and communities of color. The law requires specified levels of employment of local residents and targeted communities on at least \$10 billion worth of public works construction over the next 10 years. It is unique in its wholesale abandonment of the concept of “good faith efforts” in favor of mandatory local hiring, and its approach in measuring outcomes within all trades, not just overall projects.

The San Francisco law is also unique in that it contains a “reciprocity agreement” provision with neighboring counties, which reflects the regional nature of the construction workforce. The law balances the need to guarantee a share of the local tax-funded public construction jobs for local residents with the goal of supporting the Bay Area economy as a whole, thus ensuring regional employment when no local jobs are available. San Francisco has already signed a reciprocity agreement with San Mateo County, assuring San Mateo residents of participation in work being done at the San Francisco Airport and on other projects.

The Single Flaw: No PLA or CWA

We believe that local hiring works as a community development tool only when construction jobs are union jobs, based on the wages, benefits, and working condition protections that union employ-

ment brings. The one shortcoming of the San Francisco policy is that it does not include a mandatory provision for implementation through a Project Labor Agreement (PLA) or Community Workforce Agreement (CWA). Advocates spent many months last year building support among community contractors who might have reservations about their capacity to function under such an approach, but while several trades collectively bargained to craft changes to the legislation, the Building Trades Council rejected an amendment proposed by Mayor Gavin Newsom to require PLAs to implement the new policy.

Within Six Months, Some Obvious Benefits

Six months into implementation of the law we already see signs of success:

- Our partners in labor are recruiting local apprentices to deliver targeted workers on covered public projects.
- Costs associated with the first wave of projects are coming in at or below budget on average.
- There are more opportunities, such as preparation for the America's Cup, for advancing a common community-labor agenda based on the new partnerships.

As we seek to revitalize the economy, San Francisco's local hire approach is part of an evolving nationwide dialog about how to advance the triple bottom line of environment, economy, and social equity, by building communities and a stronger labor movement ■

Joshua Arce is executive director of Brightline Defense Project.

Utuma Belfrey is CEO of Sustainable Futures and a journey-level member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 6.