

Gov. Pritzker Announces Federal Grant Supporting Tradeswomen In Illinois

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CHICAGO — Today, Governor JB Pritzker joined Acting U.S. Secretary of Labor Julie Su, representatives from the Illinois Department of Labor (IDOL), and Chicago Women in Trades (CWIT) to announce a \$1.35 million federal grant to the Illinois Department of Labor. This funding will go towards supporting tradeswomen-led efforts to train and support the entry of more women into infrastructure and construction careers.

“Today’s announcement of another grant from the U.S. Department of Labor recognizes what we know to be true: Illinois is a national leader in building pathways for women into infrastructure and construction careers,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “By cementing this priority in the implementation of the \$1.2 trillion Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill, the Biden-Harris administration has established a new era in our efforts to diversify an industry that has historically lacked job opportunities for women, and particularly for women of color. We may still have a long way to go in dismantling decades’ worth of barriers, but we’re making progress on building that future today.”

“Illinois’ legacy in the labor movement could not be achieved without the dedication and hard work of women in the trades, helping to create good union jobs and uplift working families,” said Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton. “With the support of our administration and the General Assembly, the Illinois Department of Labor will continue to improve our roads and bridges while empowering more women to join our local workforce.”

In partnership with the Illinois General Assembly, Gov. Pritzker has made investing in equitable pathways for women and people of color a cornerstone of recent state infrastructure projects, from Rebuild Illinois to the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA). The federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill, signed into law by President Joe Biden, enables municipalities and states, including Illinois, to continue investing in workforce training. The legislation sets equity goals and priorities on federally-financed infrastructure projects ranging from roads and bridges to airports and waterways.

“In order to build an economy from the bottom up and the middle out, we need a workforce that brings in all of America—this grant and others like it help to do just that,” said Acting Secretary of Labor Julie Su. “The Department of Labor is working closely with our partners at the federal, state and local level to ensure that workers, families and communities that have historically been left behind will benefit from the once-in-a-generation investments of the Biden-Harris Administration. I’m glad to be joining Governor Pritzker to make this announcement, which will bring more women workers into good jobs in the construction industry.”

“It’s our goal that with this grant, while working alongside Chicago Women in Trades, we can continue to transform the public construction and infrastructure workforce to include more women,” said Illinois Department of Labor Director Jane Flanagan. “That starts with greater access to the industry, apprenticeships, and using data to measure retention and opportunities for advancement.”

“We need to see more women -- from the boots on the construction site ground to the board room – succeed in their chosen career paths,” said Cassaundra Rouse, Executive

Director of the Illinois Tollway. “We are making good progress, but we know there is always more work to be done. And we appreciate the support shown by everyone here today.”

This grant will allow CWIT to provide specific guidance on program design and best practices to construction companies, unions, public bodies, and other stakeholders to promote workforce equity on infrastructure projects.