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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

January 5, 2015

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Mr. Edward A. Boddie, Chief
Contracts Branch
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Wanamaker Building
100 Penn Square East
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3390

Reference: Solicitation Number: W912BU-15-MAT JBMDL

Dear Mr. Boddie,

I would like to take this opportunity to offer some additional views as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) reviews the above referenced project at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst (JBMDL) and other projects currently in formation in the North Atlantic Division USACE.

In light of the regularly sophisticated and often security-prone construction needs at our military bases, I have every confidence in the New Jersey work force. In my home state, we have highly-trained and highly-qualified workers who take great pride in their professional output. Whether building a facility, laying pipe, running electrical wire, or any number of other trades, I believe the New Jersey workforce is extraordinarily well qualified and trained to tackle any job USACE is planning. It is my hope that when considering contract awards, USACE will take all fair and reasonable steps to properly employ this highly-skilled group of NJ trades-people.

As I have long stated, we must protect the integrity and workmanship of construction projects that take place on our military installations while at the same time protecting the facilities from intrusion by potential security threats. Both Best Value Contracting (BVC) and Project Labor Agreements (PLAs—with agreed upon terms and conditions) can offer these protections by ensuring that all workers on government job sites are properly trained, vetted, undergo background checks and comprehensive security screening, and are monitored while on the jobsites.

My support for contracting measures that work to ensure better workmanship and better base security is nothing new. Following breaches at military bases that allowed undocumented

workers to gain access to these installations, I introduced the Military Base Security Act. The legislation sought to prevent security breaches such as when 21 undocumented workers were arrested and charged with using fake Social Security numbers to work on projects at Fort Dix and McGuire Air Force Base. Additionally, some 80 undocumented workers were arrested on charges after federal authorities found them working at Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming and the Air Force Academy in Colorado. While the infamous Fort Dix Six—who gained access to the base as pizza delivery personnel with plans to detonate explosives—were not on the facility as a result of military construction projects, they, too, underscored the need for screening those who will either work or conduct business on our military installations.

You may know that after these reported breaches, I subsequently arranged a series of meetings with representatives of New Jersey's building trades and Pentagon officials to address these issues and contracting guidelines at our military bases. We made the case that by using PLAs and BVC more aggressively, our military would be in a much better position to help ensure that documented, trained professionals are doing the work on our bases. Both methods of contracting would also foster an atmosphere whereby contracts would be awarded to firms and workers with the technical knowledge and experience to get the job done right, on budget and on time.

Additionally, PLAs and BVC help to fend off misclassification of workers and shoddy workmanship that we have had to endure at JBMDL, the U.S. Courthouse in Trenton, the Veterans Outpatient Clinic in Brick, and many other facilities around the country. In my experience, without BVC or PLAs, unknown contractors from out-of-state can be awarded superficially "low-bid" contracts which they may be unable to carry out. This causes unnecessary delay of services, cost overruns to taxpayers, and a lack of trust and transparency in the contracting system.

Kindly accept this letter as evidence of my support of awarding contracts to companies who plan to employ local labor, as well as for the use of Project Labor Agreements for the above referenced and future projects. In the absence of a PLA, I fully support the use of Best Value Contracting measures as a way to ensure that the work done on our military bases and federal buildings is performed in the most timely, expert manner possible by screened, secure, and qualified local personnel.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

CHRISTOPHER H SMITH
Member of Congress

CHS:jss