



NEWS RELEASE

Business Roundtable

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CONTACT: Tita Freeman
202-496-3269

BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE ANNOUNCES INITIATIVE TO SPUR CONSTRUCTION TRAINING AND BRING JOBS TO THOUSANDS OF GULF REGION RESIDENTS

Effort by Business, Labor and Government Vital to Continuing Gulf Coast's Recovery; "GREAT" Campaign to Promote Initiative and Drive New Workers to Construction Industry

Washington, D.C. – Business Roundtable today announced the rollout of a broad-based effort to recruit and train up to 20,000 new construction workers in the Gulf Coast region by the end of 2009 and to help continue the region's recovery from last year's hurricanes. The Gulf Coast Workforce Development Initiative is spearheaded by the Roundtable and is working cooperatively with local businesses, construction trade groups, labor unions, community organizations, academic institutions and federal, state, and local government to achieve this goal.

"The Gulf Coast region is a key component of a strong national economy, and Business Roundtable CEOs remain committed to helping this area regain its vitality," said Charles O. Holliday, Jr., Chairman and CEO of DuPont, who is Co-chairman of the Gulf Coast Workforce Development Initiative along with Riley Bechtel, Chairman and CEO of the Bechtel Group, Inc. "This landmark public-private partnership – involving businesses, the federal government, states and other organizations – will train the workers that will be needed to rebuild the area."

The Roundtable, an association of 160 CEOs of the nation's leading companies, has taken a leadership role in creating and launching the Gulf Coast initiative. Roundtable companies are committing up to \$5 million for critically needed early funding to coordinate the training and assist in recruiting participants. Funds from the U.S. Department of Labor's Pathways to Construction program and national emergency grants will be used to implement the training.

"The massive challenge of reconstruction in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita offers a major opportunity to build skills and employment in the impacted region, especially among disadvantaged and displaced residents, helping the region retain and develop its residents, and accelerating its economic recovery," Bechtel said. "The regional demand for construction labor significantly exceeded supply even before Katrina and Rita. This has obviously been accentuated by the recovery and occurs in the context of a growing national shortage of construction labor.

"This partnership between government and business will be a powerful catalyst for recovery in the Gulf region, retention and development of the local population, and a model for future disaster recovery," Bechtel added.

In a letter to Members of Congress, the Roundtable wrote, "While the national response to the devastation of the hurricanes has been unprecedented, the Gulf Coast region continues to need

support for reconstruction. Our goal is to help rebuild the Gulf Coast region's structures, economy and spirit.”

Roundtable CEOs have been working on the project for several months, and received support and encouragement when they discussed the Gulf Coast training initiative in a meeting with President Bush at the White House earlier this year.

Political leaders from the region also praised the new program.

“This program is a good example of the progress being made to employ the residents of the Coast in the ongoing work of rebuilding the communities in which they live,” said Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS). “This Coast-wide effort will help address our immediate need to rebuild and recover following the hurricanes, while equipping those left unemployed by Hurricane Katrina with skills that will enable them to build a career in the construction industry.”

“While the residents of Louisiana and Mississippi have demonstrated their resilience in the months following last fall's hurricanes, there's a great deal of work still ahead, and we need skilled workers to get the job done,” said Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA.) “I'm pleased to see business, labor and other groups working together to lend a helping hand to rebuild our communities and revitalize our economy.”

GREAT Campaign to Recruit Participants in the Training Program

In August the Initiative will launch the **Gulf Rebuild: Education, Advancement and Trainig – or “**GREAT**” – campaign to promote the program and recruit participants from the region to take part in the training. The GREAT campaign will start with pilot programs in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and Jackson, Mississippi, and expand into other Gulf Coast communities in the future.**

Participants will enroll in a four-week course that gives them entry-level skills to prepare them for jobs in the construction industry. In the future, the Initiative hopes to offer options for advanced workshops and apprenticeships for students who want to prepare further for advanced construction trades jobs.

“This project is gaining momentum thanks to a wide and expanding network of participating organizations, and we're already seeing interest from the region's contractors,” Holliday said.

Training will primarily be conducted by instructors certified by the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER), a not-for-profit organization created to develop industry-driven standardized curriculum with portable credentials to help address the skilled construction workforce shortage. New worker training is also being performed under the approved apprenticeship programs of the Building and Construction Trades.

“The need for craft training to provide a trained workforce in the Gulf area has never been greater than it is today,” said Don Whyte, NCCER president. “We want to help rebuild our communities – and rebuild the lives of the Gulf Coast residents.”

Other partners and supporters of the Gulf Coast initiative include the American Association of Community Colleges; Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc. (ABC); Associated General Contractors (AGC) of America; Building and Construction Trades Department of the AFL-CIO;

Construction & Maintenance Education Fund (CMEF); Construction Industry Roundtable (CIRT); Construction Users Roundtable (CURT); Greater Baton Rouge Industry Alliance (GBRIA); Greater New Orleans Business Roundtable; Greater New Orleans, Inc.; Home Builders Institute; Houston Business Roundtable; Houston Community College System; Lake Area Industry Alliance; Louisiana Chemical Association; Louisiana Community and Technical College System; Louisiana Department of Labor; Louisiana Recovery Authority; Louisiana Workforce Commission; Mississippi Construction Education Foundation; Mississippi Department of Employment Security; National Black Chamber of Commerce; Office of the Federal Coordinator for Gulf Coast Rebuilding; and the U.S. Department of Labor.

Contributors to the project include a wide range of companies and organizations, including A. O. Smith Corporation; Accenture Ltd.; Air Products and Chemicals, Inc.; American Express Company; American International Group, Inc. (AIG); Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc. (ABC); Bechtel Corporation; Business Roundtable; Chevron Corporation; The Dow Chemical Company; Duke Energy Corporation; DuPont; Exxon Mobil Corporation; FedEx Corporation; Fisher Scientific International Inc.; General Electric Company; McKesson Corporation; National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER); National Gypsum Company; PB Foundation; Pfizer Inc.; The Shaw Group Inc.; Washington Group International, Inc.; and Xerox Corporation.

To view a copy of the letter to Congress and to learn more about the Initiative, visit www.businessroundtable.org.

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Business Roundtable (<http://www.businessroundtable.org>) is an association of chief executive officers of leading U.S. companies with over \$4.5 trillion in annual revenues and more than 10 million employees. Member companies comprise nearly a third of the total value of the U.S. stock market and represent nearly a third of all corporate income taxes paid to the federal government. Collectively, they returned more than \$110 billion in dividends to shareholders and the economy in 2005.

Roundtable companies give more than \$7 billion a year in combined charitable contributions, representing nearly 60 percent of total corporate giving. They are technology innovation leaders, with \$86 billion in annual research and development spending -- nearly half of the total private R&D spending in the U.S.