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Energy Key to Construction and Job Opportunities



By Lenore Janis

Women have been making significant strides and carving their own niche in the male-dominated field of construction over the last few decades. Their contribution continues to impact the industry as they provide the talent and skills needed to enhance the growth of construction.

While fewer in number, women in the industry have been actively employed as construction and project managers, engineers, architects, facilities and property managers. Many are also skilled tradeswomen working on construction sites. The number of construction businesses owned by women has increased from less than 1% in the mid-1980s to over 10% today.

In 1979 when I started the first woman-owned steel erection firm in the New York Metropolitan area, I was considered a pioneer. Today however, the continued expansion of jobs and career opportunities within the construction industry for women and men alike depends on affordable and dependable electricity.

As New York State's population grows it will need new homes, office buildings, transportation systems, hospitals and schools, all of which require massive amounts of energy. The simple fact is that demand for electricity is and will continue to increase and the excess supply is just not there.

The economic repercussions result in high electricity costs and energy shortages, which affect all New Yorkers, putting pressure on businesses and hard-working men and women who are already facing high costs at every turn.

To ensure that we have the supply to foster the needed construction projects and jobs of tomorrow, which in turn can potentially offer more opportunities to women in the field of construction, we need to take multiple steps, including retention of existing sources of power generation and renewal of our state's power plant siting law, Article X.

This will lay the foundation for the development of new transmission infrastructure and renewable energy sources throughout the state.

According to the long range projections of PlaNYC, tens-of-millions of new square feet of construction are projected in the coming decades to service the needs of the more than one million new downstate residents. This is the very thing needed to further stimulate career opportunities for women in the industry. Let's make sure we have the clean and affordable energy to support this development and growth.

Lenore Janis is president and a co-founder of Professional Women in Construction (PWC, www.pwcusa.org), a nonprofit organization established in 1980. A member of New York AREA, PWC is committed to advancing, entrepreneurial, professional and managerial opportunities for women and other "non-traditional" populations in construction and related industries.

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