

PERSPECTIVE:

Workforce Development

NSSGA[®]
NATIONAL STONE, SAND
& GRAVEL ASSOCIATION

A skilled and highly trained workforce is vital to safely operating aggregates facilities and for the companies that manufacture and supply equipment to produce the critical materials found in every road, bridge, tunnel, energy, water and public works project. Unfortunately, many across our industry are unable to hire and retain an adequate workforce in today's labor market. **The aggregates industry takes pride in investing in their employees by providing high paying salaries, robust training, support and career development. In fact, the average salary in the aggregates industry exceeds \$75,000 annually.**

IN BRIEF:

NSSGA is fighting for policies and funding from the federal government that will ensure aggregate producers can access the skilled employees needed to continue producing the building blocks of America.

■ **Career and Technical Education (CTE):** NSSGA has been fighting to reinvigorate and modernize career and technical education (CTE) programs at the nation's high schools and colleges that prepare students for existing, in-demand jobs. NSSGA was pleased to support passage of The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act of 2018, which ensured employer engagement in the career education pathway. **NSSGA urges Congress to support increased funding for CTE programs in the Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations bill** as the programs supported by CTE will benefit aggregate producer's ability to hire and retain a skilled workforce.

■ **Workforce Pell:** As Congress looks to reform our nation's higher education system, NSSGA is actively pushing for an expansion of Pell Grants into education programs that will help prepare the next generation of students for a career in the aggregates industry. NSSGA supports the *Jumpstart Our Businesses by Supporting Students (JOBS) Act*, which directs federal Pell Grants toward job training programs at community colleges and allows employers and



schools to work together in preparing workers to fill the growing skills gap in our industry.

Under current law, Pell Grants — needs-based grants for low-income and working students — can only be applied toward programs that are over 600 clock hours or at least 15 weeks in length, even though many quality job training programs are shorter term. The *JOBS Act* would expand eligibility to students enrolled in high-quality job training

ABOUT NSSGA: *Aggregates are the second most utilized product in the world and are the foundation to create buildings, roads, airports and bridges. They are indispensable in developing the infrastructure needed to access clean water; deliver reliable energy; and advance environmental stewardship. The National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association (NSSGA) represents more than 90 percent of the crushed stone and 70 percent of the sand and gravel produced annually in the United States.*

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programs that are at least eight weeks in length and lead to industry-recognized credentials and certificates.

■ **Veterans:** The men and women who served in uniform have made tremendous sacrifices to defend and protect our nation. That is why NSSGA supports our veterans as they transition out of service and into civilian life. Many veterans acquired quality training and transferrable skills while serving in the military that are valuable in the aggregates industry. It is imperative that veterans can utilize their skills to find meaningful careers in the private sector. The HIRE Vets Program at the Department of Labor helps establish critical connections between industry and veterans and NSSGA asks Congress to keep robust funding that supports growth of the HIRE Vets Program.

■ **DRIVE Safe:** Safe and efficient transportation of construction materials to jobs sites is critical to supporting our nation's infrastructure. NSSGA advocates for federal policies that help grow the availability of truckers that are

desperately needed. We support the *DRIVE Safe Act* and are encouraged with the inclusion of language in the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)*, which would establish a three-year pilot program under which employers could create apprenticeship programs to allow drivers under the age of 21 to drive commercial motor vehicles in interstate commerce. Although 49 states and the District of Columbia currently allow individuals under the age of 21 to obtain a commercial driver's license and operate in intrastate commerce, these same individuals are prohibited from driving a truck across state lines until they turn 21.

■ **Apprenticeship:** Apprenticeships provide high-quality career pathways, allowing employers to develop and prepare their future workforce and individuals by obtaining paid work experience, classroom instruction, and portable, nationally recognized credentials. NSSGA supports federal efforts to grow apprenticeship opportunities, such as the "earning while learning" model, which has proven to close the skills gap and strengthen the workforce.