The Bulletin
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Manufacturing Pipeline a boost for workforce, EB

At a roundtable I convened at Electric Boat on May 28, U.S. Secretary of Labor Tom Perez noted that our nation is facing what he called an "Eisenhower moment." In the wake of World War II in the 1950s, President Eisenhower led a national undertaking to develop the federal highway infrastructure that interconnected our country at an unprecedented level and grew our nation's economy. Today, Secretary Perez noted that our nation must mirror that effort to develop a "skills infrastructure" in our workforce that will help our economy grow and succeed.

In our region, partners at every level have united over the last five years to develop a regional workforce strategy known as the Eastern Connecticut Manufacturing Pipeline. Led by the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board and



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Electric Boat, along with the state Department of Labor, local community colleges and technical high schools and many others, the program is equipping Eastern Connecticut workers with the precise skills that employers are seeking — helping workers and their families secure good jobs, and strengthening our region's industrial base.

Electric Boat and Three Rivers and Quinebaug Valley community colleges, along with state technical high schools, have developed a customized 10-week training program aligned with the job trades in the most demand. John Beauregard, executive director of EWIB, and Maura Dunn, vice president of human resources at Electric Boat, kicked off the May 28 roundtable with a strong presentation that captured the years of strategic science, technology, engineering and math education planning that went into the regional strategy. I was proud to have been part of the effort to secure those STEM strategic planning dollars, which led to the direct creation of 162 jobs and scores of additional jobs through the multiplier effect. Secretary Perez repeatedly stated that this approach should be replicated nationally.

My commitment to this invaluable effort is twofold. First, I am committed to ensuring that the Department of the Navy and Congress will deliver the historic submarine contracts as promised to Electric Boat. The procurement of this work will create the demand for labor. Second, my commitment is to work with EWIB and other workforce partners to support their delivery of scalable training programs to build skill sets to fill these new positions at Electric Boat and hundreds of their supply companies.

This difference-making initiative will generate economic opportunity for our state residents and talent for our employers. As we collaborate to secure work for Electric Boat and their suppliers, train our workforce with the skills of tomorrow and strengthen the Manufacturing Pipeline, our economic reality demands that we redouble our efforts to develop smart, forward-thinking workforce training programs to set our region on the path to success — for the benefit of workers and employers in our region.

—Joe Courtney is the U.S. congressman representing Eastern Connecticut's 2nd Congressional District.