

INTERNATIONAL UNION OF OPERATING ENGINEERS

LOCAL NO. 49, 49A, 49B, 49C, 49D, 49E, 49L
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Dear Senators,

I write to express support for the bonding bill before you, but also bitter disappointment that a larger, traditional bonding bill won't pass this year. I thank the Governor, House Speaker and Senate Majority Leader for being willing partners in negotiations over bonding. DFL leaders tried to get a deal, but they didn't have a realistic negotiating partner in the Senate.

DFL leaders put sincere effort into working across the aisle to create a bipartisan bill. They even agreed to spend money outside of bonding on Senate GOP priorities, such as nursing home and road funding. The notion that the Senate GOP is being treated unfairly, or that the DFL leadership is steamrolling them, is simply not accurate. I am very disappointed that this bonding bill doesn't address the needs of the whole state. And there is only one reason for this result — the Senate GOP chose to walk away from a fair deal.

To my Senate GOP friends, I am incredibly frustrated. We spoke to many of you during this process. When you voted down a commonsense bonding bill with many of your projects in it, we talked, and I understood that you needed space to try to negotiate for other priorities. You did that. And you won. The final offer that was made public included a bonding bill with your projects in it — and \$200 million in one-time money for nursing homes and roads. That was a good deal. A fair deal. I want everyone in this state to be clear: The Senate GOP chose to say no. They are not victims here. I cannot understand the choice, and neither will your local communities or our members who live in your districts.

We appreciate the opposite approach of the House GOP. Specifically, Leader Demuth and Bonding Lead Urdahl demonstrated leadership. They rationally decided that a bonding bill with many projects in Republican districts that would help their communities was more important than making a meaningless political point. I applaud those House GOP members who voted for the bonding bill in March and tried to work with DFL leadership and the Senate GOP to find a deal on bonding. They demonstrated a true commitment to their districts, to the state and to Local 49 members' jobs.

I also want to say that I understand the GOP frustration. We are concerned about a number of items moving forward and how they will impact the business climate in Minnesota. We are frustrated that some of our concerns and commonsense asks for adjustments to these proposals are not being heard. I understand the frustration. But that doesn't mean we get to walk away from working in a bipartisan manner to invest in our state's infrastructure when there is so much need. That is the approach in Washington, D.C.; that shouldn't be Minnesota.

As we move forward from this disappointing result, I strongly encourage our friends on both sides of the aisle to do better. Neither side should ever let disagreements over other issues preclude them from coming together to invest in our local communities and create jobs in a bonding bill. This is one area where you all can agree, where you all do agree, and you should get it done for your constituents. I hope next year's bonding discussion goes better. It needs to.

Respectfully,

Jason George
Business Manager