

Our Skills, Our

Addressing the nation's growing skills shortage and providing the nation's youth with the skills needed to obtain a decent, good-paying job was the focus of the *America's Edge: Our Skills, Our Kids* tour, a four-day, seven-city trek in January, 2008.

At each stop, hundreds of IAM members, representatives from local vocational and technical schools, students, community leaders and local legislators showed support for alternative forms of post-secondary education, including apprenticeships, high-tech institutes, vocational training and community college programs.

"For many of our children, attending a four-year college simply isn't an option," said IAM President Tom Buffenbarger. "The *America's Edge* campaign calls for a national skills initiative to ensure public investment in alternative forms of post-secondary education."

Kicking off in Cape Canaveral, FL, the tour made subsequent stops in Marietta, GA; St. Louis, MO; Wichita, KS; Long Beach, CA; Seattle, WA and Chicago, IL. More than



The IAM's "America's Edge" campaign focuses on providing kids with the opportunities to learn skills for technical and vocational careers. IAM Local 701 in Chicago, IL works closely with SkillsUSA, which sponsors an Action Skills Contest that showcases the best career and technical students in the nation.

3,000 IAM members and their children participated.

"We need to educate our young people and give them the skills they need," said Transportation General Vice

The America's Edge campaign calls for a national skills initiative to ensure public investment in alternative forms of post-secondary education.

R. Thomas Buffenbarger
International President

President Robert Roach Jr., who spoke at all of the events. "All Americans want a good future for their kids and they want to

keep good jobs in North America."

Also on the tour were former Iowa Gov. Tom Vilsack and former Maryland Lt. Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend. General Vice Presidents Lee Pearson, Bob Martinez and Phil Gruber also participated.

"I want my sons to have a bright future, but they'll only have a bright future if America continues to build things better than anywhere in the world," said Vilsack. "That's going to require education and apprenticeship programs – and that's going to require *America's Edge*."

Our Kids

“We need to explain the joy that comes from making something work – from being proud of what you produce,” Kennedy Townsend said in St. Louis. “We don’t hear these stories enough from our political leaders or our president.”

A Big Impact

In Marietta, GA, students joined the guests on stage as they spoke, offering a visual reminder of the purpose of these events.

In Chicago, students at Austin Polytechnical Academy walked the guests through their latest projects and spoke passionately about their current classes in robotics and engineering.

And at the Long Beach rally, a group of more than 30 students from Foshay Learning Center showed their admiration for the current

generation of skilled workers by asking union members in attendance to autograph an *America's Edge* poster.

The IAM’s efforts are already reaping dividends. At the Seattle rally, Washington state Governor Christine Gregoire announced a \$3 million addition to the state’s budget for aerospace and technology apprentice programs.

“This investment is about further improving the future of our state’s economy, and apprenticeship programs are a critical component in providing a skilled workforce,” said Gregoire.

Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, who was on hand at the Wichita rally, recently signed legislation providing \$33 million in bonds for



Photo by Slobodan Dimitrov

Transportation General Vice President Robert Roach, Jr. in Long Beach, CA, at one of several “America’s Edge” tour events that highlighted the IAM’s campaign for a national skills initiative to ensure good jobs for future generations.

Wichita plane maker Cessna Aircraft to build a new jet, ensuring the creation of good, high-paying jobs.

The influence of the IAM’s “skills” initiative is also being felt in the presidential race. Senator Hillary Clinton proposed a \$2.5 billion per year workforce training program.

At the 44th Annual Leadership & Skills Conference at the Prairie Capital Convention Center in Springfield, IL, the IAM provided 60 high school and post-secondary students with *America’s Edge* shirts to wear as they participated in the “SkillsUSA Action Skills Contests.”

To join the *America’s Edge* campaign, go to www.AmericasEdge.tv.

Students at the Austin Polytechnical Academy in Chicago, IL explain their educational program to former Maryland Lt. Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend and GVP Robert Roach, Jr.

