Today, we have access to knowledge sources worldwide in a matter of seconds. Yet with all this information, we still seem to have a deficit of facts that we can use with absolute surety of their accuracy. So we take special pleasure in writing a foreword to a book of numbers based in facts.

The Construction Chart Book: The U.S. Construction Industry and Its Workers delivers an assessment of where we stand as an industry, based on the most recent data available from trusted public and private sources. The book covers construction industry economics, demographics, and changes to employment and training, in addition to safety hazards and dangerous chemicals that can compromise life and health. In short, this book examines aspects of construction that affect every man and woman working in our industry.

This edition sheds light on issues that have arisen in the last five years. We hear about green jobs and employment, but how many jobs have been created, in which trades, and where are they located? Page 12 will show you. Where can you find the number of U.S. construction workers who’ve gone back to work since our downturn? Page 22. For those who want to know the number of OSHA inspections from 2001 to 2010, page 51 may surprise you.

But this book is more than a flipchart of facts. With facts we see trends, and with trends we identify issues that negatively affect workers and industry. Page 21 confirms that the number of wage earners declined during the recent recession while page 23 shows that the percentage of construction workers who are “unincorporated self-employed” jumped from 16% in 2007 to 19% in 2010. That change may look small, but it means 1.7 million construction workers are classified under that category in our industry. They aren’t protected by OSHA. When they suffer an injury, they are on their own, with no workers’ compensation to cover medical and lost-time expenses. It’s a disturbing trend for workers and our nation.

Those of us in America’s Building Trades Unions are proud to point to the book’s publisher: CPWR – The Center for Construction Research and Training, a not-for-profit institution created by our Department. CPWR’s research products, whether a report, website, conference summary, or this book, are available online at no charge. We are prouder still to see this information offered to all parties interested in the construction industry – owners, contractors, associations, government, academia, and of course unions and workers, union and non-union alike. CPWR is able to offer this top-quality research through its cooperative agreement with one of our nation’s most important federal agencies, whose work often goes unnoticed, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

We’ll end with the sobering statistic found on page 38. Our industry leads this nation in the number of workers killed on the job every year. That alone should make everyone in this noble but dangerous industry take a look at this book – and the work of CPWR. It’s everyone’s business to make our worksites safer and healthier for all.

SEAN MCGARVEY
President, Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO
Board Chair and President, CPWR

BRENT BOOKER
Secretary-Treasurer, Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO
Secretary-Treasurer, CPWR

ERICH (PETE) STAFFORD
Executive Director, CPWR