



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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Governor Shapiro Spotlights Major Investments in Workforce Development, Progress in Expanding Pennsylvania's Workforce at SMART Sheet Metal Workers Local 44 in Luzerne County

In his first two budgets, Governor Josh Shapiro secured an additional \$61 million for vo-tech, career and technical education (CTE), and apprenticeships.

Since taking office, the Shapiro Administration has enrolled 55 new registered apprenticeship programs and nearly 10,000 new apprentices.



Wilkes-Barre, PA – Today, **Governor Josh Shapiro** visited SMART Sheet Metal Workers Local 44 in Luzerne County to highlight how investments in workforce development, job training, apprenticeship programs, and vo-tech included in the bipartisan budget he signed into law this year are giving Pennsylvanians the freedom to chart their own course and opportunity to succeed.

Thanks to a grant from the **Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED)**, Local 44 is in the process of upgrading its training center to provide state-of-the-art technology and training for apprentices in high-need fields like HVAC, metal roofing, kitchen exhaust hoods, and air balancing.

SMART currently has 32 active apprentices, all of whom are benefitting from the earn-as-you-learn model that the **U.S. Department of Labor** says puts them on track to earn an estimated \$300,000 more over their careers compared to workers who don't graduate from an apprenticeship program.

"I am committed to delivering results for the good people of Pennsylvania — tackling our most urgent challenges and bringing Democrats and Republicans together to get things done," said **Governor Shapiro**. "I'm proud of the historic investments we've made in job training, apprenticeship programs, and career and technical education because these initiatives create pathways to economic opportunity and give Pennsylvanians the freedom to chart their own course. My Administration values skills and experience, recognizing that everyone's journey is unique, and ensuring that every Pennsylvanian has the chance to succeed."

The Governor was joined by **Warren Faust, President of NEPA Building and Construction Trades Council, Bob Rushkowski, Training Coordinator at SMART Sheet Metal Workers Local 44, and AJ Bonk, an apprentice at SMART Sheet Metal Workers Local 44**, as well as local and state legislators.

"The use of certified apprenticeship programs pays dividends both today and long into the future. These programs provide access to careers for young men and women in our local communities, enabling them to raise families, buy homes, and become valuable taxpaying assets," said **Faust**. "Together, we can train tomorrow's workforce today, ensuring future success stories like the ones we are hearing about today."

"These programs are not just about getting a job, they are about building a career and contributing to a sustainable future. Creating a state-of-the-art training center will help fill a vital need in the industry by ensuring that our apprentices receive top-notch, hands on training," said **Rushkowski**. "This DCED grant is going to assist in integrating newer technology into the program, enabling us to build a 10-station CAD (Computer Aided Design) Lab. Training apprentices on the latest sheet metal fabrication tools and machinery can improve efficiency and precision, making them more competitive on the job. I am excited to invest in the young men and women from our area that are the future of this local."

"I joined Local 44 Sheet Metal Workers Union in hopes of a stable career that would build upon the skills I had. This program gives local individuals access to the education, training, and skills needed to thrive in the highly competitive HVAC and Mechanical Contracting business," said **Bonk**. "As sheet metal workers, we are the only trade that fabricates everything we install. The apprenticeship teaches young professionals how to fabricate, install, and design all aspects of a HVAC system and more. Because of Local 44, my wonderful and loving spouse, Mariah, and I have been able to purchase our first home and receive great healthcare."

In the [2024-25 budget](#), **Governor Shapiro** secured significant investments to help open doors of economic opportunity and give Pennsylvanians the freedom to chart their own course – investing in all paths to success. In his first two budgets, **Governor Shapiro** secured an additional \$61 million for career and technical education (CTE) and apprenticeships – a more than 50 percent increase. Both of the Governor’s first two budgets included sustainable funding for DCED’s Foundations in Industry program, which provided the grant for SMART Local 44’s training center.

"This budget not only addresses immediate needs but also invests in long-term economic growth. By focusing on education, healthcare, and workforce development, we are laying the groundwork for a prosperous future for all Pennsylvanians," said **Senator Marty Flynn**.

"I am excited to welcome Governor Shapiro to my district to share with our community the strategic investment and excellent plan he developed to create good-paying jobs for our hardworking people in NEPA. This investment addresses career and tech education, apprenticeship programs for much-needed healthcare workers, and student teachers. The Governor’s statement, ‘Get Stuff Done,’ is embodied in his plan to do just that," said **Representative Eddie Day Pashinski**.

"It's great to have our Governor in Luzerne County today, and we thank him for his tremendous support of our area. Every time I talk to the Governor, we talk about good-paying, family-sustaining jobs with benefits and a pension. We have been able to do some great things under the Governor's leadership, and one of the projects we were steadfast about is the CTE program and our trade schools," said **Representative Jim Haddock**.

Since day one, the **Shapiro Administration** has been focused on creating real opportunity for hardworking Pennsylvania workers to obtain good-paying jobs. The Shapiro Administration has approved over 50 new apprenticeship programs — with 15,755 registered apprentices currently active — and enrolled nearly 10,000 new apprentices since Governor Shapiro took office. The **Department of Labor & Industry’s Apprenticeship and Training Office (ATO)** also currently supports 884 unduplicated registered apprenticeship program sponsors and 1,561 occupation-specific programs across the Commonwealth. Additionally, there are 121 registered pre-apprenticeship programs and 1,213 pre-apprentices currently active.

SMART, the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, and Transportation Workers, is one of North America’s most dynamic and diverse unions with 208,000 members. SMART’s members produce and provide the vital services that move products to market, passengers to their destinations and ensure the quality of the air we breathe. Membership includes sheet metal workers, service technicians, bus operators, engineers, conductors, sign workers, welders, production employees, and more. SMART advocates for fairness in the workplace, excellence at work, and opportunity for all working families. The [2024-25 bipartisan budget](#) makes investments in all paths to success, from vo-tech and apprenticeship programs to continuing education:

- **Expanding CTE and Vo-Tech:** Building on critical investments made last year, the 2024-25 budget includes a \$30 million increase for Career and Technical Education (CTE) programming and equipment and continues \$7 million in support of dual enrollment.
- **Registered Apprenticeships:** To help fill much needed healthcare positions across the Commonwealth, this budget includes \$2 million in first-time funding for nursing apprenticeships.
- **Student Teacher Stipends:** After Governor Shapiro last year signed into law Act 33 establishing the \$10 million [Educator Pipeline Support Grant Program](#), which provides up to \$15,000 to eligible

student teachers in Pennsylvania, this budget includes a \$10 million increase – double last year’s investment – to fund student teacher stipends, helping to address the teacher shortage in Pennsylvania.

- **UC Staffing:** After bipartisan support in the 2023-24 budget led to the hiring of more than 380 additional Unemployment Compensation interviewers to staff service centers and answer calls, this budget includes \$68 million from the Service Improvement and Infrastructure Fund (SIIF) to continue providing efficient, timely, and helpful customer service.

For more information on how the 2024-25 budget will create opportunity for Pennsylvanians, visit shapirobudget.pa.gov.

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