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Moquin/Glavin: Union labor for Vermont housing

Our Turn

Jan 21, 2026

Every day, tens of thousands of Vermonters head to work with the pride of knowing their union jobs support their families and their communities. Union members care for our patients, teach our children, plow our roads, protect public safety, and keep our towns and cities running. But they also build Vermont — and they're ready to build more.

Union labor is already at work on major construction projects in Burlington. But not because we were selected outright — we were brought in after non-union contractors couldn't deliver.

At the new Burlington High School, a non-union contractor won the bid. But they couldn't handle the job alone and hired union subcontractors to get the work done. That project is \$6 million under budget and ahead of schedule. At the Burlington Square Project, union ironworkers were called in after delays on the first building done by non-union labor. Union plumbers and pipefitters had to redesign the entire project and then install their new design. When these projects needed help to keep going, union labor stepped up and finished the job.

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So why aren't union contractors being hired from the start?

We at Vermont AFL-CIO know we can do more — for housing, and for union jobs. Across the country, we've been working with AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust (HIT), which invests in housing projects that use 100% union labor, has a \$7 billion portfolio, and has reinvested union pension dollars to help build over 130,000 housing units.

They helped finance \$31 million in new construction in Lynn, Massachusetts, that created 71 new units, including 53 units dedicated to affordability. And HIT invested \$58 million for 240 affordable units in Boston's Brighton neighborhood. These projects and many more across the country are using union labor and union pension dollars to build more housing. But here in Vermont, we don't have any projects.

It's time to change that. We need to partner with a developer who wants to build housing that pays workers fair wages, is built safely, and on time. Vermont needs affordable and moderately priced housing. We have the skilled union workforce to build it. What we need now are developers and public leaders who will commit to working with us.

Vermont works when our union workforce is strong, and we know that union labor works in Vermont. Let's put them to work building homes our communities can afford.

Larry Moquin is Laborers' International Union of North America member, Local 668 business manager, and Vermont AFL-CIO president. Matt Glavin is Vermont Building & Construction Trades Council president and Vermont AFL-CIO Building Trades vice president.

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