



Austin Bridge & Road employee-owner, Willie Fort receives National attention

WASHINGTON, May 22 (ARTBA) - American Road & Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA) Contractors Division President Jim Andoga, president of Dallas-headquartered Austin Bridge & Road, and one of his employees, Willie Fort, a structures foreman, were featured guests at a May 21 National Press Club lunch event led by U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood and aimed at highlighting success stories of the economic stimulus law.

WASHINGTON, June 3 (Reuters) - Willie Fort is a lucky man. Last month he came within a whisker of losing his construction job, but now he is off to Louisiana to work on a highway project that will employ him for at least two years.

The 32-year-old father of four from Mississippi is among hundreds of construction workers who are either keeping their jobs or finding new employment as the U.S. government's record \$787 billion package to jump-start the economy is slowly disbursed.

"I was quite thrilled and very shocked," Fort said with a chuckle. "There was nothing lined up, so there was a big possibility that I could have been laid off."

But his employer, Texas-based Austin Bridge & Road, bid for some of the stimulus-funded construction projects across the United States, saving Fort and several other employees from joining the country's growing ranks of unemployed.

"We were getting ready to lay off about two dozen people on a project in Mississippi and as a result of having picked up one of the stimulus projects in Louisiana, we offered them all jobs," said Jim Andoga, the company's president.

"We have not hired new people, but what this project did is to save 20 to 30 other jobs. The project is going to go into high gear in about three months and we are going to need to hire about 20 people more."

Not only has Fort avoided becoming a casualty as the longest recession since the Great Depression rages on, he also got a promotion.

"The job is going to require him to work a little further from home, but it's two years of steady employment. Last week we offered him a promotion to go there. He was the lead carpenter working on an hourly basis and we promoted him to foreman's position," said Andoga.

WASHINGTON, May 22 (US Secretary of Transportation, Ray LaHood's blog) - Mr. Fort says that, thanks to this job, he and his wife can move ahead with plans to buy a house back in Mississippi. That is stimulus.

This is what it's all about. The thousands of men and women like Mr. Fort. The hundreds of companies like Austin Bridge & Road.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act is working for Willie Fort; it's working for America.

Willie Fort in PRINT:

- Reuters
- The White House blog
- Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood's blog May 22 & June 3
- National Press Club
- ARTBA Press Release
- AGC SmartBrief

Willie Fort in VIDEO:

- CNN
- CSPAN 1
- CSPAN 2
- NBC News - Baton Rouge
- You Tube

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