

State News for NSPE Members

Puerto Rico Gets \$158 Million for Two Broadband Programs

Puerto Rico will receive an additional \$158 million allocation from the US Treasury Department to develop broadband infrastructure that includes building two new submarine fiber-optic cables to boost resiliency and reliability of internet services, [News is My Business reports](#).

During a news conference in Washington, DC, Joseph Wender, director of the Capital Projects Fund at the US Treasury's Office of Recovery, explained that the funding will be divided to cover two initiatives: \$85.7 million for the Puerto Rico submarine cable resiliency program, which will construct a new submarine fiber route to the island from the Dominican Republic and the US Virgin Islands and create three new cable landing stations on the island's coastlines; and \$64.7 million to fund the Puerto Rico Multipurpose Community Technology Center program, which seeks to establish namesake centers throughout the island.

"This is a critical part of the president's commitment to uplifting families and creating an economy that works for everyone and, at Treasury, we're excited for the opportunities that these funds will create in Puerto Rico," Wender said. [Read more](#).

New Partnership Aims to Boost Circular Economy in Puerto Rico

A new strategic partnership aims to boost the circular economy innovation on the island of Puerto Rico to convert unmanaged or landfilled items, such as sargassum seaweed, plastics and tires, into new products, [according to Forbes](#).

The New York-based technology center, Newlab, and the island's economic development organization, Invest Puerto Rico, are recruiting entrepreneurs and early-stage companies to pilot innovative waste conversion solutions. The aim is to reduce landfill waste, unlock the potential for renewable life cycles of materials,

such as end-of-life tires, waste plastics, and sargassum seaweed, and turn these items into valuable resources.

Sargassum is a seaweed whose excess growth in recent years is affecting the coastal ecosystems and communities of Puerto Rico and other nearby Caribbean islands.

Tires are another damaging waste stream in Puerto Rico, with almost 18,000 tires being disposed every day on the island. And by harnessing advancements in recycling technologies and circular design principles, the partners seek to make plastic recycling viable in Puerto Rico to alleviate the issues around plastic waste and to reduce dependency on imports. [Read more.](#)

Stay up to date on legislative issues through the [NSPE Advocacy Center](#).

Workability Webinars Series to Focus on Emerging Tech

NSPE offers a live webinar series free to members—“WORKability Wednesdays”—to support members with their professional development goals. The first webinar of this season took place on September 13 - [How New PFAS Regulations Will Impact Water and Wastewater Utilities](#). A webinar on [What Utilities Want Fleets to Know About Moving to Electric Vehicles](#) will take place on September 27.



NSPE members get free access to the webinars, but must register to attend. Visit the [PE Institute](#) to review the full series line-up and to mark your calendar for these live, online events.

Registration Open: 2023 NSPE Women's Leadership Virtual Fall Symposium

Join us for these live, one-time events to hear from experts in the field and join your colleagues in important discussions organized by NSPE's Women Leadership Program Task Force: [The Cost of Leadership](#); [Leading Yourself: Learning to Increase Your Emotional Intelligence](#); and [Networking Strategies: An Unconventional Approach to Connecting with Others](#). The webinars will take place on October 12, October 19, and October 26 at 1:00 p.m. (ET). This exclusive package is free and includes all three live, one-time sessions. The sessions will not be recorded and PDH credits will not be issued for them.

[Register now.](#)

#NSPECon23 Revisited

NSPECon23 provided an opportunity to learn and build community in the heart of Louisville, Kentucky. Find photos from the All Things Louisville reception, the first-time attendee mixer, PE Day celebrations, recognition and installation ceremonies, and more on [NSPE's Flickr account](#) . Relive the fun and excitement with all your PE peers that gathered to celebrate the engineering profession.



Save the Date: NSPECon24—Raleigh, North Carolina—August 7–9



A False Solution for Our Workforce Challenges

The Alliance for Responsible Professional Licensing (ARPL) recently posted an opinion column that highlights the risks of weakening professional licensing requirements to address workforce challenges. NSPE is a member of ARPL.

Workforce shortages, talent pipelines at a trickle and expensive labor are all-too-familiar challenges facing businesses and the public sector. In an attempt to tackle these problems, there is a growing trend of exploring the weakening or elimination of certain key job requirements. These proposals include getting rid of college degree requirements without equivalency alternatives, doing away with requisite testing, and downgrading credentials and licensure for professionals.

To be sure, there are some elements of the occupational licensure process that require continuous improvement and elimination of impediments disparately impacting underrepresented groups. However, in the rush to address workforce challenges, legislators and other policymakers must be cautious not to create new problems that leave employers and the public at risk.

Weakening professional licensing requirements is a false solution to various workforce ills. Minimum qualifications ensured by licensing exist to protect employers and the public they serve. This is particularly important for technical professions with high public impact, such as architecture, certified public accountancy, engineering, landscape architecture and land surveying. Care must be taken to ensure that critical licensing systems for such professions, designed to ensure public and economic protection, are not compromised and swept up in

broad-brush calls for occupational licensing reform. [Read more](#) .

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