

## State News for NSPE Members

### Study: Less Centralized, Renewable Power Safer As Hurricanes Increase

Research that used Puerto Rico as a test case demonstrates that using scattered renewable energy sources will modernize power grids and be less costly than repairing hurricane damage to a centralized grid. The research, done in part by University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez, was recently published in the journal [Nature Energy](#).

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### Board Initiates Transportation Changes

The Puerto Rico Oversight Board approved measures to reorganize the governance of the transportation sector, improve the management of the sector, and increase its funding. This [could have a major effect](#) on the central government's and the Highway Transportation Authority's debts. Board staff advocated reorganizing the different Puerto Rico government transportation entities so they each manage only one class of transportation, [BondBuyer says](#).

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

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### New Report: Valuing Professional Licensing

For years, professional associations and regulatory boards lacked hard data that demonstrated the value of licensing. In 2020, the Alliance for Responsible Professional Licensing (ARPL) sought to fill that information gap by commissioning Oxford Economics to help better understand the nuanced impacts of licensing on professions and trade and vocational occupations. NSPE is a founding member of ARPL.

The report [Valuing Professional Licensing in the United States](#), includes several key findings:

- Across all professions and occupations, **licensing is associated with a 6.5% average increase in hourly earnings**, even after accounting for the job holder's educational attainment, gender, and racial demographics.
- Among professionals in technical fields requiring significant education and training, **a license narrows the gender-driven wage gap by about one third and the race-driven wage gap by about half.**
- Those in trade and vocational occupations can expect a **7.1% hourly wage increase** after becoming licensed, while those in a profession requiring advanced education and training can expect a **3.6% wage increase** after becoming licensed.

ARPL will host a **live webinar on February 24, 2021 (3:00 p.m. eastern standard time)** to review findings and conclusions of the report and share new strategies for lawmaker outreach. [Register now](#).

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## Licensing Reform Must Prioritize Public Safety, Says NSPE President

NSPE President Tricia Hatley has once again made the case for keeping public health, welfare, and safety at the forefront of efforts to reform occupational licensure and increase mobility.

In a recent column directed to state and local government leaders, Hatley warns of the risks of implementing one-size-fits-all universal licensure proposals that do not maintain necessary education and experience standards.

*Most people agree professionals should be allowed to move across state lines and earn a living with the least cost and hassle possible. Likewise, most people want to protect the public's health, safety and welfare by ensuring they are being served by qualified professionals who have the knowledge, skills and experience for the job. This is especially true in highly technical, high-impact professions that the Alliance for Responsible Professional Licensing represents like certified public accountants, architects, engineers, surveyors and landscape architects.*

*Here comes the rub: many of the universal licensing proposals being pitched to state lawmakers, including those put forth by the American Legislative Exchange Council and in Arizona, tend to focus exclusively on the first point—improving mobility—while disregarding the second—ensuring standards necessary to protect the public.*

*In other words, universal licensing mandates don't consider the critical importance of substantially equivalent requirements between states. Instead, they dictate that*

*states must accept a license issued by any state without regard for, understanding of, or any input in, the underlying minimum competency requirements behind the license.*

[Read the full op-ed column.](#)

## PEs Can Strengthen Autonomous Vehicle Safety

NSPE is calling on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to rely on the expertise of professional engineers and follow recommendations in the Society's [Autonomous Vehicle Policy Guide](#) as part of the federal safety framework for automated driving systems.



In [recent public comments](#), NSPE President Tricia Hatley informed the agency that NSPE is committed to creating a world where the public can be confident that engineering decisions affecting their lives are made by qualified and ethically accountable professionals. NSPE [Position Statement No. 03-1772](#) states that the testing and deployment of AVs must include a professional engineer. The rationale for the position is rooted in a professional engineer's ethical obligation to protect the public health, safety, and welfare.

The Society also recommends that the NHTSA implement a third-party verification process. A third-party verification process should establish that the ADS technology under review meets a minimal level of safety, as determined by an assessment of risk. This can be done through the submittal of risk assessments audited by a professional engineer who is in responsible charge of the third-party verification process.

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