

ABAC NEWS

Auto Body Association of Connecticut

JULY - AUGUST 2026 EDITION

ABAC Summer Social:

Building Connections Beyond the Shop



Treasurer
**Samantha
Griswold**

Meet your
New ABAC

Secretary
**Kevin
Clavette**



The Official Newsletter of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut

Also In This Issue

President's Message: "ABAC Highlights as We Enter the Fourth Quarter" 2-3

From the Desk Of ABAC VP Ashley Brunelle - ABAC Summer Social: "Building Connections Beyond the Shop" 4-7

Getting to Know Your New ABAC Treasurer, Samantha Griswold - Atwoods Auto 8-10

Getting to Know Your New ABAC Secretary, Kevin Clavette - Ace Auto Body 11-13

We Need Your Voice: Help Document What is Really Happening in Collision Repair - ABAC Legal Counsel - John M. Parese, Esq 14-15

Upcoming ABAC Events 15

New ABAC Members 15

TechForce - More Than 73,000 Collision Techs Needed by 2029, Retention Partially to Blame 16-19

ABAC Officers & Board of Directors 20

The goal of the ABAC News is to provide a forum for the free expression of ideas. The opinions and ideas appearing in this publication are not necessarily representations of the ABAC and should not be construed as legal advice.

From the Desk of ABAC President

Bob Amendola

ABAC Highlights as We Enter the Fourth Quarter



As we round the bend toward Q4, I wanted to take a moment to highlight a couple things that we have been continually focusing on and that I believe are important to the future of our businesses and our industry.

As we have mentioned before, we have made a real effort to have open and up-front conversations with our customers about potential out-of-pocket expenses.

These conversations have become much more streamlined, and our team is more comfortable than ever explaining the issues at hand directly to vehicle owners. While we are no longer shouldering the burden of insurance short pays, our hope is that we are also helping to educate consumers along the way.

When customers better understand what their insurance policy does and does not cover, they can make more informed and conscious decisions when choosing an insurance policy and company in the future. If you are apprehensive to do the same, please reach out. Start small, focusing on one company or one specific issue like parts. You can fine-tune your approach and build up from there. As an industry, we cannot sustain without addressing this issue head-on.

I want to encourage all of our members to consider investing in the next generation of our workforce. As the school year begins, there is another grade of students and future technicians coming up. We recently hired two recent technical-school graduates full-time, who had previously been working with us through our school's Work-Based Learning (WBL) program. They are now our third and fourth team members to come through that program.

The ABAC has a longstanding relationship with CTECS and our commitment to the program remains steadfast. At our board meetings, we regularly brainstorm about how we can assist and improve the curriculum and support our future technicians. The more shops that participate in the WBL program, the better. I understand that participating in WBL requires a commitment of time and effort from your team.

Continued on Page 3

Continued from Page 2

Training someone takes patience, and there is an investment involved. But in my experience, it is one of the best investments you can make in the future of your business. I encourage every member to reach out to the instructor at your nearest technical school, build a relationship with them, and consider getting involved in the WBL program. You are not only giving a student valuable, real-world, hands-on experience, you are also helping develop and invest in the next generation of our workforce. Give it a try. You may be surprised by what comes from it.

I'd also like to mention that we have had numerous meetings and correspondence with the Department of Insurance and Attorney General through the board of directors, our lobbyist Andy Markowski and Attorney John Parese. While our current general recommendation is to address these issues with your customers, we will continue to push the issue elsewhere. More to come.

Lastly, I was thrilled to see so many new and familiar faces at our Summer Social. Events like these are a great opportunity to step away from the day-to-day, connect with fellow members, and strengthen the relationships that make this association so valuable.

I look forward to seeing everyone at our golf tournament at Lyman on Wednesday, September 2nd. I hope you will join us!

As we head into the final quarter of the year, stay connected, keep pushing forward, and remember that you have an entire association and network in your corner. Don't be a stranger.

Bob Amendola

Autoworks of Westville

President - Auto Body Association of Connecticut

"The delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image, but giving them the opportunity to create themselves."

- STEVEN SPIELBERG



ABAC Summer Social: “Building Connections Beyond the Shop”



This summer, the ABAC was pleased to welcome nearly 60 members, vendors, and industry colleagues to our annual Summer Social, held at Haven Beer Co. in Hamden on Friday August 14th.

While much of ABAC's work throughout the year centers around education, advocacy, and providing valuable resources to our members, the Summer Social gives us an opportunity to focus on something equally important: **unity**.

Our four quarterly membership meetings provide a forum to discuss the issues affecting our industry, share information, and bring educational opportunities to our membership. The Summer Social is intentionally a little different. There is no presentation or agenda—just an opportunity to step away from the day-to-day demands of our businesses, catch up with familiar faces, meet new ones, and strengthen the relationships that make our association what it is.

ABAC AUTO BODY ASSOCIATION OF CONNECTICUT

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AUG 14, 2026
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Attendees began arriving after work around 6:30 p.m. and spent the evening enjoying food, drinks, and great company. With approximately 60 attendees representing both collision repair facilities and industry vendors, it was great to see so many different parts of our membership come together in a relaxed setting. A 50/50 raffle and several gift card raffles added a little friendly competition to the evening and helped make an already enjoyable night even more fun.

Continued on Page 5

Continued from Page 4



Events like the Summer Social are a reminder that there is real value in getting to know the people we work alongside outside of our usual meetings, phone calls, and day-to-day business interactions.

Our industry is constantly evolving and facing new challenges, and having a strong, connected association gives all of us a better foundation from which to navigate them. Building those relationships helps promote the unity and collaboration that remain at the heart of ABAC.

Thank you as well to everyone who joined us at Haven Beer Co. and helped make the evening such a success.

It was a great night spent with colleagues and friends, and we look forward to continuing to bring our membership together—both through the educational work of the association and through opportunities to simply enjoy each other's company.



Continued on Page 6

Continued from Page 5



“The best collaboration happens when we swap our tools for food, drink, and great conversation.”

Continued on Page 7

Continued from Page 6



A special thank you goes to our supporting advertisers, **Wesco** and **AkzoNobel**. Their continued support helps make events like the Summer Social possible, and we are extremely appreciative of their commitment to ABAC and our membership.



Submitted by Ashley Brunelle - Vice President - Auto Body Association of Connecticut

Getting to Know Your New ABAC Treasurer Samantha Griswold - Atwoods Auto



Tell us a little about yourself and your role at Atwood's Auto Appearance.

I'm the manager at Atwood's Auto Appearance, but like everyone here, I wear many hats. We're a true team, and everyone pitches in wherever they're needed.

How did you first become involved in the collision repair industry?

I've been working for George since I was 18 years old. Before that, I worked at a nearby Dunkin' Donuts—my first official job. George stopped in every morning to pick up coffee for the shop. At the time, I didn't know him as George, I only knew him by his coffee order! I worked first shift and had a simple rule for my regular customers. If they ordered the same thing three days in a row, I'd ask, "Same thing today?" Eventually, I'd have everything ready before they even walked through the door.

Apparently, George noticed my work ethic and attention to detail because one day he asked if I'd be interested in a job. I remember replying, "What kind of work, Mr. Medium Regular?" since that's all I knew him by.

Later that day, I stopped by the shop, filled out an application, and George gave me a tour while introducing me to everyone. He assumed I was only looking for part-time work because of my job at Dunkin', but I explained that I wanted a career change and was available full-time. Inside, I was thinking, "*What are you doing? You know nothing about the collision repair industry!*" I was completely intimidated, but George was incredibly patient, and the entire team welcomed me. I'm a visual learner, and everyone took the time to show me what needed to be done. That support made all the difference.

What has your career path been like leading to your current position?

Although my title is manager, everyone here does whatever needs to be done. If a vehicle needs to be cleaned, I'm cleaning it. If someone needs help removing a part, I'm there. If I need to move the wrecker, I'll move the wrecker. You can't build a successful business unless you're willing to be part of the team.

Who has had the biggest influence on your career?

Without question, George. If he had never approached me about that job, I probably never would have discovered this career or learned the skills that have shaped my future.

Involvement with ABAC

When did you first become involved with the Auto Body Association of Connecticut, and what motivated you to attend meetings?

Shortly after I started at Atwood's, George invited me to attend the quarterly ABAC meetings. There was never any pressure to go, but I quickly realized how valuable they were. Every meeting was a learning opportunity. In 2023, I was asked to join the Board of Directors. Every day at work we're fighting for the things our business needs, but it's difficult to create meaningful change on your own.

Continued on Page 9

Continued from Page 8

Serving on the Board gave me the opportunity to work alongside others who are committed to improving our industry—and together we've accomplished some real change.

What have you found to be the biggest benefits of being an ABAC member?

The biggest benefit is the sense of community. You never have to feel like you're facing challenges alone. There are always people you can talk to, exchange ideas with, and learn from. These are colleagues from collision repair shops across Connecticut, and although we're competitors in some ways, we're all working toward the same goal—running successful businesses. We're all figuring it out together.

Is there a particular meeting, event, or initiative that stands out as especially meaningful to you?

Every time we come together as an association, I learn something new. That alone makes every meeting worthwhile.

Leadership**What inspired you to accept the position of Treasurer?**

Can I say I was "voluntold?" (*Editor's Note: This may be the best answer we've ever received during one of our member interviews!*)

What do you hope to accomplish in this role?

It's difficult to answer because I'm still learning what to expect, but I'm excited for the opportunity. I know the experience will help me continue to grow professionally. As ABAC always says, "**Knowledge is Power,**" and I'm confident I can help make a positive difference.

How do you see ABAC continuing to help independent repair facilities throughout Connecticut?

We need to continue bringing together people who share our passion for this industry. We care too much to simply sit back and watch things happen. We must continue creating positive change while providing education and resources that help repair shops succeed.

What challenges do you believe our industry will face over the next several years?

The next few years will certainly be challenging. Technology is advancing rapidly, and consumers are becoming more informed and willing to advocate for themselves.

I believe we'll face obstacles, but I'm hopeful those changes will ultimately move our industry in a positive direction.

Looking Ahead**What advice would you give collision repair professionals who have never attended an ABAC meeting?**

I'd simply ask them, "**What are you waiting for?**"

If you're looking for more knowledge, education, and networking opportunities, come join us.

Why is it important for members to become involved beyond simply attending meetings?

Become a Board member. It gives you the opportunity to help shape the future of our industry.

Continued on Page 10

Continued from Page 9

There's strength in numbers, and the more voices we have, the stronger our association becomes.

Personal**What do you enjoy doing outside of work?**

I enjoy hiking with my dog, spending time gardening, and reading whenever I get the chance.

Is there anything our members may not know about you?

On weekends, I work at a local garden center—and I love it because people are actually happy to see me! At Atwood's, customers usually arrive after an accident and are understandably stressed because their vehicle has been damaged. We do everything we can to help them through that difficult experience.

Working at the garden center is completely different. People come in excited to shop, and it's a great way for me to relax, clear my head, and enjoy a different pace of life.

Rapid Fire Questions!

Early bird or night owl? **Early bird**

Favorite vehicle you've ever owned? **It was my 1992 325i BMW**

Dream car? **I really want a Subaru WRX STI**

Favorite vacation destination? **Vermont**

Best piece of advice you've ever received? **"Nothing is constant except for change"**

If you weren't in the collision repair industry, what career do you think you'd have? **Landscape Architecture/Design**

One word that describes your leadership style? **Team. "I believe in leading by example, so I wouldn't expect anyone to do something I wouldn't do. And if you need help, we can do it together."**

One thing you hope every ABAC member knows about the Association? **That we're here to help. Always!**

What does being a part of ABAC mean to you in one sentence? **That I don't have to do this alone.**

Samantha Griswold's journey into the collision repair industry began with a cup of coffee and an unexpected opportunity, but her dedication, willingness to learn, and team-first attitude have made her an invaluable leader at Atwood's Auto Appearance and within the Auto Body Association of Connecticut. As ABAC's new Treasurer, Samantha brings not only financial stewardship to the Board, but also a genuine passion for education, collaboration, and strengthening Connecticut's independent collision repair community.

On behalf of the entire ABAC membership, we'd like to congratulate Samantha on her new role and thank her for taking the time to share her story with our readers. We look forward to working alongside her as ABAC continues its mission of advocating for the collision repair industry and providing the knowledge, resources, and leadership that help our members succeed.

Congratulations, Samantha, and thank you for your commitment to ABAC and the collision repair industry. We wish you continued success in your new position as Treasurer.

Submitted by Don Cushing - ABAC News

Getting to Know Your New ABAC Secretary Kevin Clavette - Ace Auto Body



Tell us about yourself and the history of Ace Auto Body.

Like a lot of people in this industry, I started young. I was 16 years old when I began working at Ace Auto Body, sanding cars and helping with whatever needed to be done. Ace Auto Body was founded by my grandfather in 1960. My father, Gary, joined the business in 1972 and retired in 2020. I attended Central Connecticut State University, where I earned a bachelor's degree in Business Management with a minor in Entrepreneurship. I've been working at Ace Auto Body full-time since 2002.

What led you into the collision repair industry?

Honestly, I got into it because I noticed none of my friends were going into the trades. Back then, everyone's parents were telling us to go to college, get an education, and you'll make good money without having to work hard. I saw a tremendous opportunity in the trades, especially since my family's business was already established. I've always loved working on cars, so it seemed like the perfect fit. Looking back, it was really a no-brainer.

What do you enjoy most about owning and operating a collision repair business?

You never know what's going to be sitting at your front door on Monday morning. Every vehicle is different. Every customer is different. Every insurance company presents a different challenge. I love the unpredictability. There is no routine, and that's what keeps the job interesting.

What lessons have you learned over the years that continue to guide your business?

Never let your emotions drive your business decisions. Always be honest with your customers—even when it's not what they want to hear.

Becoming Active in the ABAC

How did you first become involved with the ABAC?

I've been attending ABAC meetings since I was 16 years old. My grandfather was a member, and so was my father. Back then, there were several collision repair associations throughout Connecticut. My grandfather always believed it was important to belong to an association so you could understand where the industry was headed, stay ahead of emerging trends, and continue learning. Education and networking opportunities alone made membership worthwhile.

Why did you decide to become more involved?

Being part of the ABAC is truly a privilege. I'm humbled to have been asked to serve on the Board of Directors.

Every month I get to sit down with some of the best minds in our industry to discuss ideas, challenges, and the future of collision repair. You really can't put a value on that. For me, serving on the Board has been an incredible opportunity, and I was honored to be asked.

Continued on Page 12

Continued from Page 11**How has the Association helped your business, and what has ABAC meant to you both personally and professionally?**

The ABAC has been an incredible resource in so many ways. From helping us navigate insurance company issues, short payments, and customer out-of-pocket costs to keeping us informed about the rapidly changing technology in today's vehicles, the information has been invaluable. The Association has also provided guidance on working with electric vehicles, handling customer concerns, and adapting to the constant changes in our industry. The amount of knowledge and experience shared by ABAC members is truly outstanding, and it's something you simply can't put a price on.

Serving on the Board**What made you decide to serve as Secretary?**

Honestly, there was a need, and I stepped up to fill it. Let's face it—no one really wants to take notes—but it actually helps me stay focused with my ADHD. It can be intimidating to volunteer for an officer position within the Association, but it's also incredibly rewarding to know you're playing an important role in an organization that means so much to our industry.

What responsibilities and goals of your new position are you most looking forward to?

I want to bring value to my peers by sharing the knowledge I've gained from years of handling insurance claims and overcoming challenges in the collision repair business. In this industry, mistakes are expensive—you always pay to learn. If I can share my experiences and help someone avoid making the same costly mistake, then we've all benefited. Helping others succeed ultimately makes our entire Association stronger.

What issues facing Connecticut collision repairers deserve the Association's greatest attention?

I believe one of the biggest challenges facing Connecticut collision repairers is the lack of action by the Department of Insurance and the Attorney General regarding indemnification claims, third-party claims, and short payments. Our customers are innocent victims who have already been through the stress of an accident, and many are still being forced to pay out of pocket for proper repairs. That's simply not right. I know these issues can become political, but at some point someone has to stand up for consumers and independent repairers. We have to continue advocating for fairness.

Looking to the Future**How can the ABAC attract more young professionals to the Association?**

We need to be the loudest voice in the room. Today's generation lives on social media, so we need to be there too—sharing our message, promoting what we do, and showing why the ABAC matters. We've tried traditional advertising like billboards, but today's marketplace is driven by digital communication. Achieving meaningful victories for our members, especially with the Attorney General or Department of Insurance, would also go a long way toward attracting new members.

Why is it important for shop owners to support industry associations?

Knowledge is power.

What message would you like to share with current and prospective members?

Know your numbers. Know your value.

Continued on Page 13

Continued from Page 12

Remember that you set the market for what it truly costs to repair today's vehicles. Charge appropriately for your repairs, the parts you use, and every operation you perform. Never undervalue your work.

Personal**What hobbies or interests do you enjoy outside of work?**

I enjoy snowboarding, hunting, and fishing.

What accomplishment are you most proud of?

Without question, my family. I have an amazing wife and 13-year-old twin boys.

What do you hope people say about your leadership when your term is complete?

That I always spoke my mind and stood up for what I believed, even if it wasn't always the popular opinion.

Rapid Fire Questions!

Early bird or night owl? **Early bird.**

Favorite vehicle you've ever owned? **My 2002 Chevrolet Silverado Duramax Diesel.**

Dream car? **Porsche GT3.**

Favorite vacation destination? **I don't really have one. I like going somewhere different every time.**

Best piece of advice you've ever received? **Always be yourself and always be truthful to yourself.**

If you weren't in the collision repair industry, what career do you think you'd have pursued? **Law enforcement.**

How would you describe your leadership style? **Showing—not telling. I believe in leading by example.**

What's one thing you hope every ABAC member understands about the Association? **It's hard to put a value on attending just four meetings a year when the knowledge you gain can benefit your business every single day.**

What does being part of the ABAC mean to you in one sentence? **A legacy for our industry.**

Kevin Clavette represents the next generation of leadership in Connecticut's collision repair industry. Having grown up in a family business, he understands the importance of hard work, continuous education, and standing up for what is right—not only for repair facilities, but for the customers they serve. His willingness to share his knowledge, challenge the status quo, and advocate for fairness makes him a valuable addition to the ABAC's Executive Board.

On behalf of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut, we congratulate Kevin on his election as the ABAC Secretary and thank him for taking the time to share his story with our readers. We look forward to his leadership and contributions as the Association continues to educate, advocate, and protect the interests of Connecticut's independent collision repair professionals.

Congratulations, Kevin, and thank you for your commitment to the ABAC and the collision repair industry. We wish you continued success in your new role as Secretary.

Submitted by Don Cushing - ABAC News

We Need Your Voice: Help Document What Is Really Happening in Collision Repair



John M. Parese is a partner at the New Haven-based firm of Buckley Wynne & Parese

For years, I have represented consumers and worked closely with collision repair professionals throughout Connecticut. During that time, I've heard the same concerns repeated over and over. The specifics may differ, but the underlying themes and violations are remarkably consistent. The worst part: though the DOI is charged with overseeing the conduct of insurers in this space, almost no oversight is taking place.

More so than ever, appraisers have shifted from proper, safe repairs toward cost containment. Shop owners have shared countless stories with me about appraisers refusing to follow the law, disregarding manufacturer repair procedures, shortchanging consumers on total loss claims, refusing storage fees, failing to pay for necessary parts, using AI to scrub estimates, pressuring shops to alter repair plans, or otherwise interfering with repairs in ways that compromise repair quality and consumer safety.

Underlying all these stories is a pervasive sense that there's simply no accountability. The DOI knows what is happening but does nothing.

Consumers deserve to know what's going on. Our elected officials and the media deserve to know what's going on. The evidence supporting these concerns should be preserved and presented in a way that cannot be ignored.

That is why I am organizing a video interview project. The purpose is to document, in the words of experienced collision repair professionals, consumers, and associated trade professionals, what is actually occurring in the field every day.

I am looking to interview repair shop owners and customers, current or former appraisers (if you know any willing to talk), and others with firsthand knowledge of these issues. The interviews will focus on real experiences, documented examples, and the practical consequences that have left consumers paying out of pocket or otherwise harmed.

I am not looking for speculation or generalized complaints. I am looking for concrete facts and specific, detailed accounts of situations that were brought to the attention of the DOI, but ignored. I would like to hear from you if you are aware of any particularly egregious situations involving:

- Insurance appraisers refusing to comply with applicable laws or regulations;
- Pressure to ignore manufacturer repair procedures;
- Failure to pay storage on a total loss vehicle;
- Bogus condition adjustments or other unfair appraisals of total loss vehicles;
- Denials of necessary repairs or operations despite supporting documentation;

Continued on Page 15

Continued from Page 14

- Practices you believe jeopardized repair quality or customer safety;
- Consumers being forced to pay for repair costs that would typically be covered;
- Regulatory complaints that were ignored or inadequately investigated; or
- Other documented examples of improper claims-handling practices ignored by the DOI.

I would like for this project to give voice to professionals who have spent years trying to do the right thing while feeling that no one is listening. If you are willing to participate in an on-camera interview that will be shared with regulators and the media, please email me directly at jp Varese@bwplaw.com. Thank you in advance for your interest and assistance.

John M. Varese, Esq. is a Partner with the law firm of Buckley Wynne & Varese and serves as General Counsel to the ABAC. Buckley Wynne & Varese maintains offices in New Haven, Hartford and Stamford, and services clients throughout all of Connecticut. The opinions set forth in Attorney Varese's articles are for education and entertainment purposes only, and should not be construed as legal advice or legally binding. If you have any questions or concerns about the content of this or any of Attorney Varese's articles, you are encouraged to contact Attorney Varese directly.

**Upcoming ABAC Events:**

Golf Tournament - Sept 2, 2026 - Lyman Orchard Golf Club, Middlefield

Sept Membership Meeting - Sept 22, 2026 - The Woodwinds, Branford

Nov Membership Meeting - Nov 17, 2026 - The Woodwinds, Branford

**New ABAC Members:**

Wile Hyundai, Columbia

Kennie's Auto Body, Plantsville

Stratford Collision of BPT, Bridgeport

Gillette Auto Body, New Haven

TechForce: More than 73,000 Collision Techs Needed by 2029, Retention Partially to Blame



The U.S. economy is short roughly 140,000 skilled technicians a year, and the gap is widening, with 73,354 new collision repair entrant technicians needed by 2029, according to the TechForce Foundation's new "Technician Supply, Demand & Opportunity Report."

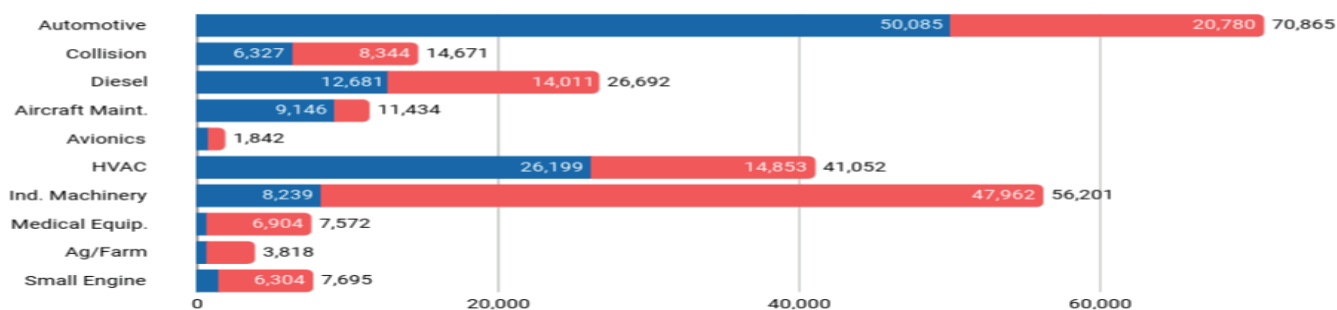
The latest edition of the report expands the foundation's analysis from four sectors to 10, covering workers who keep American cars, trucks, planes, factories, hospitals, and data centers running.

Across those 10 sectors, employers will need 241,842 new technicians per year through 2029, the report finds, compared with 101,743 students who graduated from technical schools and community colleges last year. TechForce found that the collision repair sector sees the highest turnover of the 10 analyzed at 60.7%.

However, the report adds that technicians aren't retiring faster than the overall workforce. For example, 3.5% of automotive technicians exit the workforce compared to 4.8% of all U.S. workers.

"The problem is recruitment, not retention," the report states. "This shifted the policy argument entirely."

TOP 10 SECTORS - ANNUAL POSITIONS



SUPPLY

42%

GAP IN SUPPLY VS. DEMAND

58%

-140,099

shortfall in new entrant techs per year

Sources: Supply: IPEDS C2024_A (NCES, AY 2023-24), 101,743 completions across 10 sectors, first majors only, all undergraduate award levels. Demand: BLS OOH 2024-2034 annual openings, 5-year average 2025-2029. Gap: demand (241,842) minus current completions (101,743). 1,209,218 = sum of annual demand projections 2025-2029.



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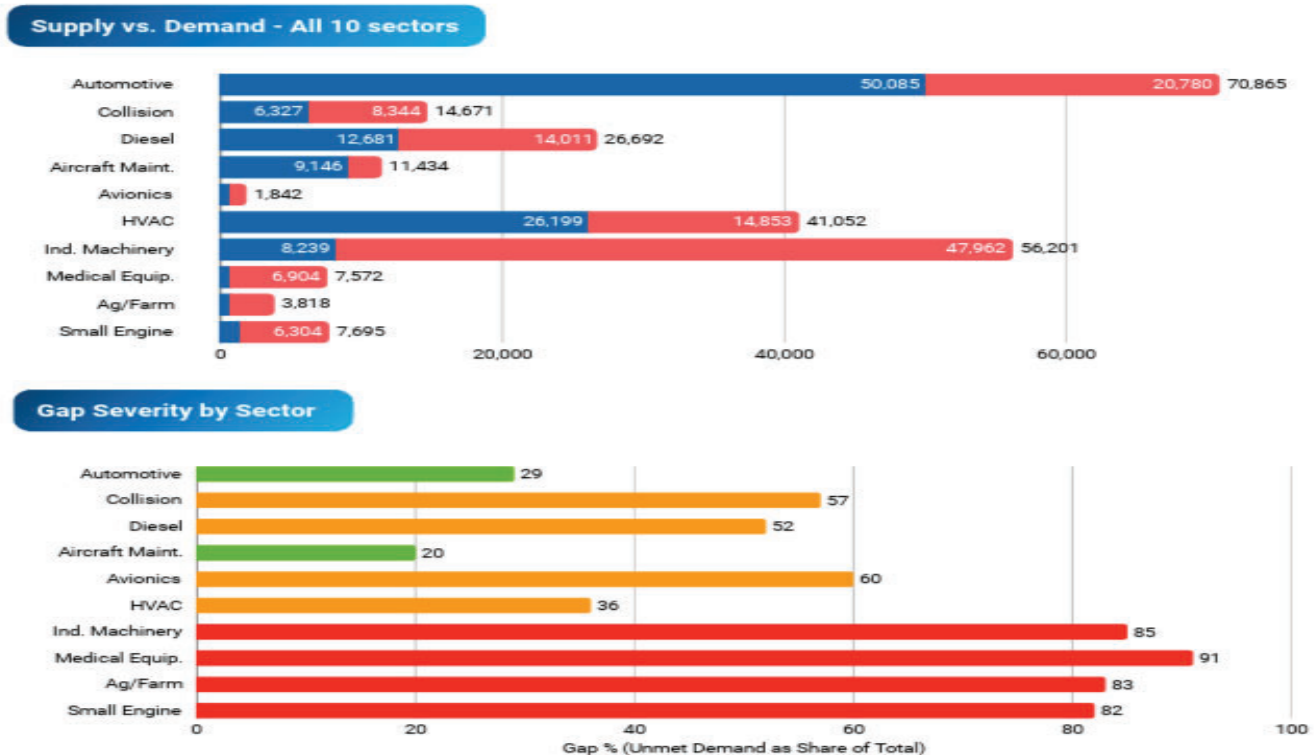
techforce.org

The cumulative five-year shortfall reaches 1.2 million workers. Lost-wage output to the U.S. economy totals \$7.42 billion a year and \$37 billion over the projection window, according to the report.

"The pendulum has swung in America," said Jennifer Maher, TechForce Foundation CEO, in a press release. "Society now recognizes four-year universities aren't the only road to success."

Continued on Page 17

Continued from Page 16



Sources: Supply bars: IPEDS C2024_A (AY 2023-24) projected forward using post-CIP-break CAGR (AY 2019-20 to 2023-24). Demand bars: BLS OOH 2024-2034 annual openings, 5-year average. Gap %: (Demand - Projected Supply) ÷ Demand.



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techforce.org | 7

Nine of the 10 sectors tracked in the report pay at or above the national median wage of \$49,500, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics data. The report notes that collision repair technicians, increasingly trained in materials science and ADAS calibration, earn \$51,680.

Most of these careers can be reached through a one- or two-year certificate program, accounting for 92% of completions across the 10 sectors covered in the report. Six of the sectors didn't produce any bachelor's degrees in 2025.

More than 4 million Americans aged 16 to 24 are neither in school nor working, according to data from the Annie E. Casey Foundation cited in the report.

"Disconnection is higher in rural counties than in urban or suburban areas," the release states. "Roughly 40% of recent high school graduates do not enroll in college, the report notes, citing the National Center for Education Statistics. Of those who do enroll, 30% drop out within two years."

The report adds that there is no modern workforce navigation system for skilled careers waiting for students when they graduate.

"We tell young people, 'You can be anything you want,' but throw them to the wind to figure it out," the report states.

Continued on Page 18

Continued from Page 17

The release notes there is currently renewed federal interest in skilled trades, with President Donald Trump signing Executive Order 14278 in April 2025, "Preparing Americans for High-Paying Skilled Trade Jobs of the Future." The order directed the Departments of Labor, Commerce, and Education to consolidate and streamline federal workforce development programs and set a target of 1 million new active apprentices.

"In January, the Labor Department issued guidance requiring all 50 states to submit modified workforce-development plans by spring 2026 under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act," the release states. "TechForce Foundation, which produces the longest-running longitudinal analysis of the U.S. technician workforce, has positioned its report as the data backbone those state plans will need."

The U.S. has 805,600 employed automotive technicians servicing a fleet at a record-high average age of 12.8 years, according to S&P Global Mobility data cited in the report. It notes that auto repair generates more than \$340 billion in annual North American revenue, according to Market Research Future. The sector produces roughly 42,000 graduates a year compared to 70,000 annual job openings.

GEN Z IS SHOWING UP

School graduations grew 7.6% in one year, up across eight of ten sectors. 100,000+ users on TechForce's platform w/2,000 to 5,000 new users every month. The stigma is breaking, and the interest is real.

THE SYSTEM IS NOT READY FOR THEM

241,842 annual technician job openings. 101,743 tech students graduating last year. Even with strong growth trends, supply meets barely 42% of demand. \$7.42 BILLION in economic output in terms of wages alone lost each year to unfilled jobs. The real cost is much higher.

THE POLICY WINDOW IS OPEN

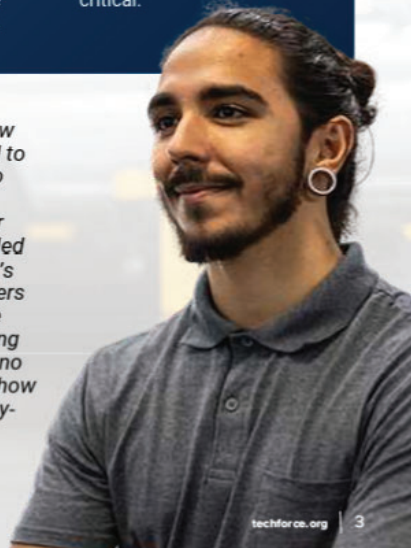
Executive Order 14278. WIOA state plan modifications in all 50 states. Federal investment in skilled careers at a level not seen in a generation. This is the report that provides the data that makes those investments critical.

"The pendulum has swung in America. Society now recognizes 4-year universities aren't the only road to success and that we need skilled professionals to keep the world moving. More than 4 million Americans aged 16 to 24 are neither in school nor working, partly because our education system failed them. They were told to 'sit still, don't move, what's wrong with you?' They are hands-on, kinetic learners who thrive in technical education classes. They're curious problem-solvers and love making and fixing things, but instead they now have no credentials, no path. The technician career was built for exactly how they are wired. Let's guide these people into highly-skilled, in-demand, sustainable careers."

Jennifer Maher, CEO, TechForce Foundation



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"Sector variance across the 10 industries is sharp. Aircraft maintenance, where Federal Aviation Administration certification has tightened the link between training and employment, fills 80% of its annual demand and is the only sector in the report approaching equilibrium," the release states. "Medical equipment fills 9%. Industrial machinery fills 15%.

"HVAC, the cooling backbone of every commercial building, hospital, and AI data center in the United States, has 669 institutions training technicians but produces graduates to fill only 64% of annual demand. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects the sector to grow much faster than average through 2034, classified as 'much faster than average' in its Occupational Outlook Handbook."

Where the graduates come from

Postsecondary completions in the 10 sectors grew 7.6% last year, the third consecutive year of growth. Eight of the 10 sectors expanded; only avionics and agricultural-equipment programs declined.

Production is concentrated. Hallmark University in San Antonio, Texas, alone produces 15.3% of all U.S. avionics-technician graduates.

Continued on Page 19

Continued from Page 18

WyoTech, in Laramie, Wyoming, leads all U.S. institutions in diesel completions. Reedley College, in California's Central Valley, produces 22.5% of the country's farm-equipment technicians. Six of the top 10 institutions training U.S. industrial-machinery mechanics are in Kentucky's community-college system.

TechForce Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that operates in all 50 states, awards \$6.5 million in scholarships annually and partners with more than 1,400 schools. Its workforce platform serves more than 100,000 students and working technicians, the foundation says, and is adding several thousand new users a month.

In a survey of 13,370 of its scholarship applicants between December 2024 and December 2025, nearly half cited the costs following paying for tuition, including tools, supplies and housing, as their primary obstacle. Eight percent were veterans whose benefits didn't fully cover their education and career paths.

"The technician career was built for exactly how they are wired," Maher said in the release. "Let's guide these people into highly skilled, in-demand, sustainable careers."

Retention compounding the problem

1.18 million hired | 1.14 million lost | Net gain: 32,450 | Highest turnover: Collision 60.7% | Lowest turnover: Aviation 32.3%

Across all 10 sectors, employers hired 1.18 million technicians in 2025 and lost 1.14 million.

The net gain was approximately 32,000 workers, against more than 241,000 annual openings.

"Pipeline expansion without retention reform will not solve the shortage," the report states. "Industry must invest in the conditions that keep technicians engaged, including comprehensive benefits, clear career pathways, modern tools, and workplace cultures that support long-term success. You cannot solve a shortage if you cannot keep the people you train."

The report notes that collision repair completions may appear lower than expected. This is because some data providers, including Lightcast, group automotive and collision completions together due to overlapping CIP codes and the reality that an automotive-trained technician can transition into collision work, the report states. TechForce says it reports these sectors separately and doesn't double-count completions across automotive and collision.

"BLS projects 14,600 annual openings for collision repair technicians through 2034," the report states. "Annual demand of 14,671 new entrants dwarfs what the training system produces. Supply covers only 42% of annual demand. At a median wage of \$51,680, collision repair pays above the national median. These positions increasingly require advanced skills in materials science, electronic calibration, and ADAS sensor alignment."

Collision/autobody completions grew 14.2% year-over-year to 5,462, the strongest growth rate of any sector. Only 325 institutions offer collision programs nationally. Texas leads completions at 11.2%.

Source: www.RepaierDrivenNews.com Article by Lurah Lowery

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