



Stimulus for some

By Boston Herald Editorial staff | Wednesday, April 8, 2009

Jobless Americans - including a quarter million Massachusetts residents – need to get back to work.

What they don't need are artificial obstacles to their re-employment. But that is what many will confront if organized labor has its way.

Yes, Bay State labor leaders are still pushing to require “project labor agreements” on large public construction projects financed with federal stimulus money, The Associated Press reported over the weekend.

Under a PLA, an owner agrees to use union labor in exchange for unions agreeing not to strike. Sporting of them, no? The agreement restricts non-union contractors from bidding on the job. (As if non-union carpenters and masons aren't showing up in unemployment lines too.)

Research has also indicated that by limiting competition PLAs drive up both bid and actual construction costs. And frankly taxpayers deserve to get more for their bucks, not less.

Unions argue that, thanks to a steady supply of highly-skilled union labor, PLAs ensure that projects are completed on schedule and within budget. But the Big Dig shreds that argument. Labor also tries to make the case that PLAs magically ensure on-the-job safety, which simply strains credulity.

If Gov. Deval Patrick buys what the unions who supported his campaign are selling - as an administration task force has recommended he do - then the 16 percent of the Massachusetts construction industry that is unionized will have cause to celebrate. Some stimulus.