

THE LICA CONTRACTOR

Volume 18, Number 2

Midspring 2025



Landscape Gal:
Designing Her Own Path

NJ LICA Member Pays
Tribute to His Father

Winter Convention Recap

The Official Publication of the Land Improvement Contractors of America

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The LICA Contractor is the official publication of the Land Improvement Contractors of America, dedicated to the professional conservation of soil and water. LICA was founded in 1951 and is today comprised of twenty-four chapters across the continental United States.

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A Message From the President



Hello all,

I first want to thank the LICA membership for your support as I take on this role as your National President. Next, I want to thank my wife, Marsha, for supporting me during my tenure on the National Board. I feel that a LICA membership is an essential business tool for success in our operations. I hope to work with Associates to garner “usable” benefits for us all. While we are operating in a very trying political environment, I hope that the newly elected administration will have the good of independent American businessmen and American farmers at the forefront of their agenda.

I feel that we had a great winter convention in Jacksonville, Florida, and I hope that everyone who attended feels the same way. I want to thank the National Staff for putting together the tours and a great program for everyone to enjoy. For those that weren’t able to make it, I hope you will strongly consider coming to Duluth, Minnesota, on July 8–12 for the summer meeting. I know that the Minnesota LICA will have many great activities for the young and old alike.

As I write this article, National LICA and your state chapters are constantly pursuing discounts and benefits for you, our members. I truly believe that all of us enjoy the networking with great people and the benefits of membership in this organization. This positive attitude only happens if we are paying attention—just like when we are in the operator’s seat of a piece of equipment, our awareness of what is going on and what needs to be accomplished is mandatory to our success. I believe that open communication is critical to the continued growth of LICA. I am eager to work with you all in our shared pursuit of excellence within this organization.

Jeff Schell, National LICA President



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Landscape Gal: Designing Her Own Path

By CAROLINE KRUG, Editor The LICA Contractor

It's early spring in rural Northfield, Minnesota. The snow has started to melt, leaving behind rich soil that will soon host tulips, trees, patios, and ponds under the careful direction of one of the region's most accomplished landscape artists. At the center of it all is Dee Ann Larson—designer, mentor, machinery pro, and the proud founder of Landscape Gal, a business as grounded and authentic as the woman behind it.

Dee Ann's path to owning a successful landscape design-build company wasn't a straight line. It was a gently curving garden path, shaped by family, grit, and an early knack for visualizing beauty in empty spaces.

Growing Up Estrem

Dee's journey starts with soil, steel, and strong family ties. Her father, Donald Estrem, owned Estrem Excavating, a business he built after cutting his teeth in the construction world with Enebak Construction. "I grew up around excavation and heavy equipment," she says, recalling childhood days spent fueling machines, checking grades with a sight level and grade rod, and later running dozers and paddle scrapers like a pro.

"I've always had the gift of being able to envision things before they exist," she says, crediting her dad for nurturing that ability. As a child, Dee's idea of fun was graph paper and rearranging her bedroom after meticulously measuring and sketching it to scale. At first, she imagined a career in architecture, until she realized it would keep her indoors. Then came a horticulture class in high school that changed everything.

"It was like architecture, but better—I could be outside and there were so many plants to learn about!" she laughs. That moment set her on a new course. She earned her horticulture



“I’ve always had the gift of being able to envision things before they exist...”



and landscape design degree from the University of Minnesota Waseca in 1983 and never looked back.

From Company Woman to Landscape Gal

Over the next two decades, Dee built her experience at nurseries, garden centers, and design-build firms, mastering not just the artistry of landscape design but the science of soil, drainage, and construction. She became a Certified Nursery and Landscape Professional (CNLP), an achievement she compares to “passing the bar” for lawyers—rigorous, respected, and renewed with continuing education to stay current in the industry.

But in 2012, life delivered a one-two punch. The company Dee worked for was downsizing due to the lingering impact of the 2008 recession, and her father passed away. That same week, she attended a business networking meeting, where she introduced herself with an email address she’d just created: landscapegal@gmail.com. A marketing professional immediately lit up. “That’s a great business name!” he said. She explained that it was simply her new email address, but he insisted on registering the business on the spot, calling the name “SEO Gold.” And just like that, Landscape Gal was born.

Building a Business, and a Reputation

Today, Landscape Gal is a lean, highly profitable residential landscaping firm known across southern Minnesota for its stunning, functional designs and honest, old-school service. Dee wears all the hats: owner, designer, estimator, and project manager, while leading a small but loyal team.

Serene dry creek bed design by Landscape Gal



Left: MNLA Award-winning design executed in a tight space between the deck steps and the patio Right: Front view of MNLA award-winning design



Beautiful Landscape Gal design, featuring stone steps that meander down a steep hill

Her foreman, also her nephew, has been with her for 12 years. Her assistant foreman? A farm kid she's known since he was born. "His great-grandmother was in my parents' wedding," Dee shares with a smile. "We're not just coworkers; we're family."

Her secret to retention? Fair pay, seasonal bonuses, and respect. "If I can make the job easier or more efficient, I invest in the equipment to do it," she says. Whether it's a mini skid loader with multiple attachments or renting bigger equipment to get the job done, Dee makes sure to take care of her crew.

A Woman in a Man's World

Landscaping and excavation remain heavily male-dominated fields, but Dee has never let that stop her. While she admits that some clients underestimate her technical expertise, she loves to watch their opinions change when she starts to explain things like proper excavation depth or how to build a sound retaining wall. And others specifically seek her out because she's a woman. "Just today, someone found me by searching for a woman-owned landscape business," she says.

Clients often comment on how she listens more, asks deeper questions, and takes the time to understand the "why" behind

a project. "Every client has a reason they want to change their landscape, even if they can't articulate it right away," she says. Dee has a knack for teasing out those needs and turning them into creative, practical, and lasting outdoor spaces.

Sometimes, she says, it's about drainage or privacy. Other times, it's about simply carving out a beautiful space to enjoy with family.

Designing with Purpose

Dee's award-winning projects are more than pretty patios or Instagram-worthy gardens; they are thoughtful, solution-based designs that enhance the way people live. One of her favorites? A multi-phase backyard renovation that began around a pool and eventually expanded to the front yard and other wooded areas. Years later, a new homeowner inherited the landscape and still calls Dee for seasonal cleanups and new enhancements.

Another standout project involved a complex grading challenge that required building a seat wall on top of a retaining wall integrated with a patio. It was a technical feat, but Dee pulled it off.

In 2009, Dee earned the Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association Award for Excellence in Landscape Design. The winning project was challenging due to the tight quarters between the deck steps and patio (as shown in the photo), which required precise elevation work to transition smoothly from the deck down the natural stone steps to the patio. The heavy clay soil meant extra digging to prep the area, and the planting beds needed plenty of compost to support healthy growth.

This wasn't her first recognition; her first MNLA design award came in 2000. "Seeing a design fully grown in 20 years later is one of the most rewarding parts of this work," she says.

Life Beyond the Job Site

Running a business means long hours and heavy responsibility, but Dee finds balance through her faith, friendships, and furry companions. She shares her home office with Josie,

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Before: Front elevation before Landscape Gal design installation



After: Completed landscape design with gorgeous curb appeal



Dee Ann Larson and her father Donald Estrem with family members

a five-year-old German shepherd, and Ruger, a golden retriever puppy with lots of energy. Three outdoor cats keep the crew company during the work season. And while she works hard during the busy months, Dee makes time for travel and plenty of card games in the off-season.

“I work hard and play hard; no moss grows under my feet,” she says. Winters are filled with all the projects she postpones during summer, and she laughs at the idea of doing nothing for four months. “9-to-5 folks don’t always understand that when you run a business, there’s always something to do.”

Giving Back, Moving Forward

Dee’s connection to her community runs deep. She sponsors bowling teams, volunteers her landscape design expertise, and provides maintenance and mulching services for her church’s grounds. She also mentors up-and-coming professionals in the field. One project she’s especially proud of involves replacing aging trees at her church with long-lasting native species. She hopes future generations will admire the beautiful trees and feel grateful to someone they never met for planting them.

She’s also an active member of LICA, a group she joined thanks to her mother’s encouragement. “It felt like family right away,” she says. She appreciates LICA’s sense of camaraderie and its mix of professional development and fun, especially at the National level. “It’s not all septic and drain tile, like in Minnesota,” she laughs. “You get exposed to so many types of businesses.”

Advice for the Next Generation

To anyone considering a career in landscaping, Dee offers practical and empowering advice: Start small, learn from others, and don’t overextend. “Too many people want to be big too fast,” she says. “Don’t be afraid to take baby steps. Rent until you can afford to buy.” Or, as Warren Buffett would say, “Earn the money first, then buy it.”

She also stresses the importance of focus. “Do what you do well. Don’t try to be everything to everyone. Your reputation is everything.”

Looking Ahead

Now over a decade into running her own company, Dee isn’t looking to scale up. In fact, she’s focused on sustainability, both in her designs and in her business model. “I don’t want to expand. I’ve got a high-profit, low-overhead company, and I like it that way,” she says. Her goal now is to slowly pass the torch to the next generation, most likely her trusted crew, so they can carry on the legacy.

“I’ll probably keep designing and estimating until I’m too old to walk around a yard,” she says with a laugh, “but I want someone else to handle the day-to-day installs.”

It’s the kind of next chapter you’d expect from a woman who’s always believed in growing things that last.

From dirt roads and dozers to award-winning landscapes, Dee Ann Larson is proof that a little grit and a lot of heart can turn rugged soil into something beautiful.

If you ask her what she does for a living, she’ll simply say: “I help people love where they live.”

And that might just be the most beautiful thing of all. ■

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2025 Winter Convention Recap: Connection, Camaraderie and Celebration

By ALLISON HACK, National LICA Executive Vice President

When the LICA family comes to town, there is always an excitement in the air, and this Winter Convention was no different. By car and plane, members traveled to Jacksonville, Florida, looking forward to warmer weather and reconnecting with other members.

On the first day of the tours, members gathered in the hotel lobby, filled with excitement, laughter, and lively conversations. Gary, the tour guide, escorted the attendees to a boat that was docked on the St. Johns River, all while sharing the historical background of the area.



LICA members gather for the Land and Sea tour



LICA Winter Convention attendees enjoying a boat ride on the St. Johns River

As the LICA Crew sailed down the river, they were thrilled to be accompanied by dolphins swimming alongside their boat. As they toured the area, the guide, Gary, shared fascinating historical insights and stories about notable sites like EverBank Stadium, Friendship Fountain, and the Maxwell House factory. After the voyage on the St. Johns, Gary guided attendees through downtown Jacksonville. Then, they were taken below ground to explore ancient bank vaults that served as bomb shelters during the Cold War.

The following day, participants had a delightful time in our nation's oldest city, St. Augustine. They explored the Fountain of Youth, Spanish Mission Grounds, Cathedral-Basilica, Spanish Government House, and more. Attendees were captivated by the stunning architecture as they wandered along the brick streets. Many members came home with a few souvenirs from the St. Augustine Distillery, a highlight of the tour.



LICA Regional VPs at the board meeting

LICA members are seasoned travelers, and they prove it time and time again. The unexpected onsite construction at the hotel could have disrupted the plans, but it certainly provided some entertaining stories! Water might have been a little touch and go, and the meeting rooms were caught in a temperature tug-of-war. Despite the chill on one side and the warmth on the other, members remained in high spirits. They responded with great humor, sharing stories about similar experiences from previous conventions, and did not let it get in the way of committee meetings.

LICA members discussed a range of topics in their various committee meetings. During the Legislative Committee, attendees welcomed Steve Sanders, former CEO of Associated General Contractors (AGC), who also worked during President Trump's first term. Steve was part of a discussion about how hard it will be to get things through Congress this year with such a slim margin in both houses. Education was a primary focus in other committees, where members shared their suggestions for upcoming seminars and potential topics for next year's CONEXPO-CON/AGG. Members also concentrated on succession and mentoring emerging leaders within the association. Everyone agreed that by establishing clear expectations, defining roles, and providing mentorship, potential officers would be more inclined to volunteer. While the committee minutes were being finalized, members participated in two seminars that focused on new benefits offered by LICA.

The upcoming CDL Benefit: Entry-Level Driver Training (ELDT) Training Provider Resources was announced by Caroline Krug from National LICA. Over six months' time, she dedicated herself to bringing this National LICA Benefit to life. The attendees quickly recognized the immense value of her efforts and were thrilled by all the hard work she put in. Participants discovered how to avoid the expenses associated with outsourcing to driving schools. They also learned the straightforward steps to becoming an approved training provider during this exclusive member seminar.

National LICA Associate, World Insurance, shared with members the details of their low-cost 401(k) program. Mike Coughlin, a Client Advisor at World Insurance, informed members that the Multiple Employer Aggregation Plan (MEAP) provides significant advantages for both employers and their employees, all while maintaining compliance with state regulations. Many states are now requiring employer-sponsored retirement plans or implementing hefty fines and penalties for those who do not comply. This program can assist in minimizing fiduciary and administrative duties throughout the process. LICA can now benefit from this exciting new offering through World Insurance and their partner, Lincoln Financial.

During most evenings, attendees opted to enjoy meals with friends they hadn't seen since the previous national event. When members finished their meals, most congregated in the hospitality suite for a nightcap. Many would think it's all "fun and games" in hospitality... and they would be correct!

One evening, the members chose to form the letters "LICA" using their own bodies. It all began when the wife of an officer (we'll keep names confidential to protect the innocent) demonstrated to everyone how she alleviates back pain by sitting against a wall. From that point, it was a simple transition to create a song inspired by "YMCA." Several members, including Executive Directors and even a former National LICA President, dedicated the evening to writing the "LICA Song."

The "love" was in the air as Associates' Night commenced on Valentine's Day. The atmosphere was lively and filled with camaraderie. Attendees took this opportunity to learn about the latest innovations and services offered by exhibitors, exchanging contact information and ideas that could benefit their businesses.



Attendees spell LICA with their bodies



A performance of the YMCA song parody L-I-C-A

During the course of the evening, attendees got a special performance of the "LICA Song," complete with hard hats and some lively dance moves. Laughter echoed through the ballroom as members joined in the fun, embracing the playful spirit of the moment. The final day of the convention focused entirely on the affairs of LICA. Board members and delegates convened to discuss and manage the association's business. Although at times conversations were heated and strong opinions were shared, members were reminded that differences in perspective are what drive innovation and growth. These discussions not only highlighted the passion and dedication of each member but also showed the importance of maintaining open lines of communication within the association. The passion and dedication for LICA and its members were apparent that evening at the awards banquet. Members donned their finest attire and watched as deserving recipients accepted their awards.

Mike Cook, a dedicated member from Michigan, received the Contractor of the Year award from his son, Adam Cook. Dee Larson had the honor of presenting her mother, Nordis Estrem, the LICA Lady of the Year award. Indiana LICA was honored for their dedication and efforts by receiving the Top State trophy.



Mike Cook (MI) receives LICA Contractor of the Year award, presented by his son Adam (left)

There was a bittersweet moment as members paid tribute to former National LICA President Dirk Riniker, who sadly passed away in 2024. His dedication to LICA was honored by inducting Dirk into the LICA Hall of Fame.

Tony Cain delivered his closing remarks as the National LICA President, expressing his gratitude to his wife, Michelle, for her support. He also shared his appreciation for the opportunity to connect with numerous LICA members from all



Nordis Estrem (MN) receives LICA Lady of the Year award, presented by her daughter Dee Ann Larson (left)



Nanci Gutwein and Keith Miller accept the Top State award for Indiana, presented by National LICA Chairman David Gallahan (left)



Outgoing National President Tony Cain (IN) receives a Caterpillar desk set, presented by National LICA Chairman David Gallahan (left)

over the country. Following his speech, he passed his National President's Pin to Jeff Schell, marking the official start of Jeff as National LICA President.

As the presentations wrapped up, music filled the air, and a few brave members even took to the dance floor. Stories were shared, and friendships were rekindled, reminding everyone of the importance of these gatherings beyond the professional.

Just like the newly created "LICA Song," the 2025 Winter Convention served as a testament to the strong bonds and shared experiences that have long been the foundation of LICA's organization. ■



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A New Jersey LICA Member's Tribute to His Father

By CAROLINE KRUG, Editor *The LICA Contractor*

For Ed Lubowicki, staying involved with the Land Improvement Contractors of America (LICA) has always made sense. It is where his father, Edward “Poppie” Lubowicki, found a network of contractors and business owners who shared his values of relationships, dependability, and a strong work ethic.



*Korean War Veteran, U.S. Army
Edward Lubowicki*

Poppie proudly served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. In addition to directing air strikes and supporting ground troops, he learned how to operate a HAM radio. After returning home, he used this skill to help deployed soldiers connect with their families. Many were deeply grateful to Poppie for lifting their spirits with the sound of a loved one's voice.

Following his military service, he worked as a building inspector before founding Lubowicki Insurance Agency. In the early 1980s, a local landscaper introduced him to New Jersey LICA, where he quickly became a familiar face. He contributed to the newsletter, earned Associate of the Year, and built lasting relationships throughout the organization.

It was through Poppie that Ed first encountered LICA, joining his father on client visits as a young professional, fresh out of college with a degree in Risk Management and Insurance.

A Memorable First Meeting

Many of Ed's earliest encounters with LICA members left a lasting impression, but none stands out more than his meeting with Tom Krutis of Tom Krutis Excavating.

“I had just started out in the business. I looked so young that I dyed my mustache to look older,” Ed recalls. “Tom was a huge man, six-foot-six and absolutely intimidating at first.”

They met at a cemetery, where Tom was clearing land.

“I remember thinking, ‘What did I just get myself into?’” Ed laughs. “When he stepped into my car, I was nervous. But I had coffee and donuts waiting for him, and it didn't take long to realize he had a heart of gold. That meeting stuck with me.”

Tom went on to become one of Ed's favorite clients. Today, Tom's sons, Tom and Mark Krutis, run the business, and Mark now serves on the New Jersey LICA Board of Directors.



Ed Lubowicki with Eddy Mayen, Executive Director of the LICA Educational Foundation for Veterans

From Family Business to National Team

As the business evolved, Ed helped grow the family agency from a personal insurance firm into a commercial operation serving a variety of businesses, such as contractors, landscapers, and excavators, many of whom were introduced through LICA. That agency eventually became part of World Insurance, a nationwide firm that focuses on local relationships.

Ed now works at World Insurance headquarters and is part of a dedicated team that supports LICA members. While he takes pride in the role he plays, he emphasizes the work of his colleagues.

“I can't say enough about Joe Amato. He is the engine behind all of this,” Ed says. “Mike Coughlin is our go-to for 401(k) planning and an incredible resource. I am just grateful to work with such a solid team.”

He is also proud of the tools they have created for members, such as a dedicated landing page on the World Insurance website to help LICA members access health insurance benefits.



The World Insurance team offering “White Glove Service” at the Total Pro Expo in New Jersey



From Left: Ed Lubowicki and Mike Coughlin of World Insurance, National LICA CEO Jerry Biuso, Sr., and World client advisor for Pennsylvania Steve Sculli

“I wish we had these kinds of resources back when I was just getting started,” he adds.

Reconnecting in Pennsylvania

At a Pennsylvania LICA event hosted by Pennsylvania 811, Ed was representing World Insurance with his team when he unexpectedly reconnected with LICA CEO Jerry Biuso, Sr.

Also at the event was Eddy Mayen, Executive Director of the LICA Educational Foundation for Veterans. While getting acquainted at the event, Ed and Eddy discovered a shared passion for lacrosse. They traded stories about coaches, games, and mutual connections, quickly realizing how much they had in common through the sport.

“Lacrosse has been a huge part of my life,” Ed says. “I played it, coached it, and even my son played on scholarship at Notre Dame. My dad didn’t understand it at first, but by the time I was in championships, he and my mom were in the stands cheering louder than anyone.”

A Gift from the Heart

Just a few days later, Ed, Jerry, Eddy, and World Insurance colleague Mike Coughlin met for dinner at The Chalet, a cozy steakhouse near Jerry’s home. It is one of his favorite places to meet and reconnect.

“The staff knew Jerry by name,” Ed recalls. “It was his place. The conversation flowed, stories were shared, and the atmosphere was warm and genuine.”

Moved by the moment, Ed pulled out his checkbook right at the table and made a \$2,500 donation to the LICA Educational Foundation for Veterans in memory of his father.

“It just felt right,” Ed says. “Like my dad was sitting there with us. Jerry was visibly touched. Eddy and I were both moved. Honestly, it brought us all to tears.”

Although neither Ed nor his sister Laurie served in the military, their father’s service always meant a great deal to them.

Supporting a foundation that helps veterans transition into new careers felt like the perfect tribute.

“Veterans deserve a chance,” Ed says. “An opportunity to learn, to find direction, to feel like they belong. The Foundation gives them that.”

Continuing the Connection

Ed is quick to recognize the leadership that has helped LICA grow, especially in New Jersey.

“Buddy Freund has done a fantastic job,” he says. “He has helped NJ LICA grow to more than 750 members and really knows how to connect with contractors. He understands what they need and how to support them.”

When it comes to being involved in LICA, Ed encourages others not to stay on the sidelines.

“It is easy to sign up and then not stay involved,” he says. “But when you take the time to learn what is available, it is worth it. From apprenticeship programs to CDL training to business resources, LICA listens and works hard to meet the real needs of its members.”

Life and Legacy

Ed and his wife Beth, who grew up just a few streets away from him, have been married for 33 years and now live in Belmar, New Jersey. They share a love for the beach, family, and LICA holiday events. Their daughter Shelby lives in Huntersville, North Carolina with her husband DJ and their son Bennett Edward Brown. Ed’s son, also named Ed, lives nearby in Davidson. Though neither child followed him into the family insurance business, Ed knows Poppie’s spirit lives on through them. Ed enjoys seeing them thrive and cherishes time spent with his grandson.

Ed reflects on his journey with LICA and the continued partnership he’s committed to supporting.

“I know Poppie would be proud,” Ed says. “Truthfully, I am just glad I can continue helping others the way he always did.” ■



2025 National LICA Summer Meeting

Agenda & Meeting Information

July 8 - 12 - Radisson Duluth Harborview

Duluth, Minnesota

Tuesday, July 8

8:00 am - 5:00 pm Soudan Mine Tour

Wednesday, July 9

9:45 am - 12:30 pm Grand Sightseeing Tour

6:00 pm - 10:00 pm Executive Committee

Thursday, July 10

8:00 am Opening Breakfast

9:00 am - 5:30 pm Committees

12:30 pm Ladies' Luncheon

7:00 pm - 9:00 pm Associates' Night

Friday, July 11

8:00 am Breakfast

9:00 am - 12:00 pm Educational Seminars

1:00 pm Lunch

2:00 pm Executive Directors' Meeting

Saturday, July 12

8:00 am Breakfast

9:00 am - 10:00 am National Board Meeting

What Does Summer Meeting Registration Include?

Summer Meeting registration includes all meal functions, Associates' Night, Educational Seminars, Committee Meetings, and the Board Meeting. All registered members will receive, a name badge, and a program when they check-in on site and are welcome to ... even encouraged to, attend any of the Committee Meetings and the Board Meeting. For a list of committees and their functions, visit LICANational.org.

Attention LICA Families: We've Got You Covered!

The National Ladies' Committee is pleased to announce that it will cover the expenses for children's activities during the Summer Meeting. If you and your children go to an attraction during the Summer Meeting, simply present a receipt to the National Staff.

LICA Ladies' Luncheon

The LICA Ladies' Committee is hosting a lunch on Thursday, July 10, for the women participating in the National Summer Meeting. Join the women of LICA for delightful food and engaging conversation.

Radisson Duluth Harborview

Located just minutes away from Canal Park and the DECC/Amsoil Arena, the Radisson Duluth-Harborview is uniquely designed as a circular hotel. You can easily access shops, restaurants, and museums along the waterfront via the connected Skywalk. Treat yourself to a delightful evening at Harbor 360, the rotating restaurant that offers breathtaking views of the harbor.



Scan code for Summer Meeting details.



2025 National LICA Summer Meeting

Optional Tours

July 8 - 12 - Radisson Duluth Harborview
Duluth, Minnesota

Soudan Underground Mine Tour Tuesday, July 8th

8:00 am - 5:00 pm

\$80 per person

Descend 2,341 feet down the shaft to the 27th level of the Soudan Underground Mine and embark on one of the most extraordinary tours not only in Minnesota but across the entire nation. You will travel into the mine using authentic, meticulously maintained hoisting equipment, followed by an underground train ride that spans nearly a mile to the Montana stope, the mine's last operational area.

*** PLEASE NOTE ***

*Mine is 51° F- wear jacket and closed toe shoes.
The three-minute cage ride down is a confined space.
No purses, bags, backpacks or strollers in the mine.*

Grand Sightseeing Tour Wednesday, July 9th

9:45 am - 12:30 pm

\$30 per person

Enjoy the most comprehensive narrated tour aboard the Vista Star, which will immerse passengers in the region's breathtaking scenery. Members will see the bustling harbor while hearing fascinating insights about its operations, science, and ecology—past and present. LICA Members will have the opportunity to see and learn about various significant sites, including the Duluth Aerial Lift Bridge, the Blatnik High Bridge, the CN/Mesabi Taconite loading docks, Midwest Energy (the largest and most comprehensive terminal on the Great Lakes), and the St. Louis River.

**Attendees will be walking from the Radisson to board the boat.*

**Concessions available for purchase on board. There is no lunch provided.*





2025 National LICA Summer Meeting

Registration Form

July 8 - 12 - Radisson Duluth Harborview

Duluth, Minnesota

Name _____ Name _____
 Company _____ Name _____
 City _____ State _____ Name _____
 Email _____ Name _____

EARLY Bird Rate Postmarked by June 6, 2025	Price	# Attending	Total
Contractor Member, Spouse or Associate Member. Includes: Thursday Breakfast, Associates' Night, Friday Breakfast & Lunch, Saturday Breakfast.	\$340.00		
Youth: 13 Years & Under	FREE		
Registration postmarked After June 6, 2025			
Contractor Member, Spouse or Associate Member. Includes: Thursday Breakfast, Associates' Night, Friday Breakfast & Lunch, Saturday Breakfast.	\$395.00		
Youth: 13 Years & Under	FREE		
Tour Registration			
July 8th - Soudan Underground Mine & Lunch	\$80.00		
Youth: 13 Years & Under (2 & Under FREE)	\$40.00		
July 9th - Grand Sightseeing Tour	\$30.00		
Youth: 13 Years & Under (2 & Under FREE)	\$15.00		
Summer Meeting Total (Registration plus Tours)	\$		

Radisson Duluth Harborview
 505 West Superior St, Duluth, MN, 55802
 Room Rate: \$139/night (plus taxes & fees)
 Call: 800 - 333 -3333
 Group: LICA
 Deadline: Friday, June 6th

Make check payable to: LICA
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For teams that need a tough workhorse that doesn't compromise on control, comfort or versatility, the CASE 651G delivers a breakout force of nearly 24,000 lbs. and a lifting capacity of over 16,100 lbs. to help teams plow through tougher jobs. The large wheel loader model also features a bigger hydraulic pump for increased cycle times, a curved bucket for better material retention and a higher hinge pin for better dumping clearance. Operators can even weigh loads and track material moved with an integrated on-board scale. And with a variety of axle options to match jobsite conditions, they'll be able to get the best traction performance possible.

The CASE 651G also helps operators stay productive longer with a roomy cab that boasts all the comforts operators love, like AC and heat, heated seats, and Bluetooth® connectivity.

"When production demands on difficult jobsites require long days of uninterrupted work, operator comfort is key to productivity for the long haul," says Neil Detra, product manager - full-size and compact wheel loaders.

"We designed this machine with operators top of mind to provide an experience that's like taking your office to the jobsite." ■



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The Impact of Tariffs on Construction Projects and How to Minimize Their Effects

By CRAIG MARTIN, Construction Attorney with Lamson Dugan and Murray

Tariffs on imported materials can significantly impact construction projects by increasing costs, delaying timelines, and straining budgets. Construction relies heavily on materials like steel, aluminum, lumber, and electrical components—many of which are imported. When tariffs raise the cost of these materials, contractors and developers face higher expenses, which often get passed down to clients and homeowners.

One major consequence of tariffs is budget overruns. Unexpected increases in material costs may force project owners to either absorb the additional expense or look to general and subcontractors to cover the cost. Tariffs can also disrupt supply chains, causing shortages or delays in acquiring key materials. This can lead to inefficiencies in scheduling, workforce management, and overall project execution.

To mitigate the impact of tariffs, contractors can implement several strategies:



1. Diversify Suppliers – Relying on a single source for materials increases vulnerability to price spikes. Sourcing from multiple suppliers, including domestic manufacturers, can help reduce dependency on tariff-affected imports and improve price stability.

2. Utilize Alternative Materials – Exploring cost-effective substitutes for tariffed materials can help maintain budgets. For instance, using engineered wood instead of imported lumber, or composite materials instead of traditional steel, can lower costs while maintaining structural integrity.

3. Plan Ahead and Bulk Purchase – Anticipating potential tariff increases and buying materials in bulk before price hikes take effect can help control costs. Long-term contracts with suppliers can also provide price stability and prevent sudden cost surges.

4. Use Contract Language to Limit Impact – Construction contracts should include escalation clauses that allow for adjustments if material costs rise due to tariffs. Contractors can also negotiate force majeure provisions or tariff-related contingencies to protect against sudden cost increases. Including a cost-sharing agreement between owners and contractors can help distribute financial risks fairly.

By implementing these strategies, you may be able to better manage the financial risks associated with tariffs and ensure smoother project execution despite economic uncertainties. ■

Craig Martin is a construction attorney with Lamson Dugan & Murray, LLP law firm in Omaha, Nebraska, and a member of the collaborative Johnson Team. The Johnson Team consists of a group of specialists serving LICA members on matters of significance – planning, protection, and preservation of their businesses and families. If you have any questions, Craig's e-mail is cmartin@ldmlaw.com.

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New Member Benefit: LICA Empowers Members to Offer In-House CDL Training

The Land Improvement Contractors of America (LICA) is proud to unveil a new member benefit designed to save money and simplify compliance with federal training requirements for commercial driver's licenses (CDLs).

LICA's ELDT Training Provider Resources now make it possible for members to bring Entry-Level Driver Training (ELDT) in-house. Rather than sending employees to expensive third-party driving schools, LICA members can take advantage of their own experience and equipment to become Private Training Providers — delivering the required training themselves and reducing the cost of onboarding new CDL drivers.

If you already have a qualified CDL driver on staff, your operation may be well-positioned to meet the federal guidelines and begin training internally. While this approach won't be the right fit for every member — as it requires time, planning, and commitment — it can lead to significant long-term savings and workforce stability.

To learn more about how to become a training provider and access step-by-step ELDT Training Provider Resources, email Caroline Krug at Cnational.LICA@gmail.com. ■



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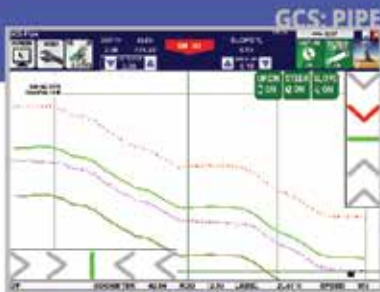
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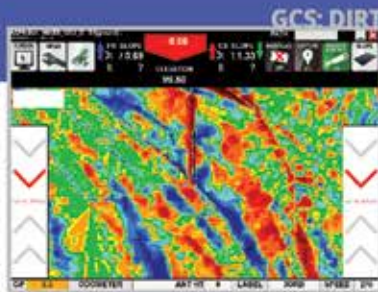
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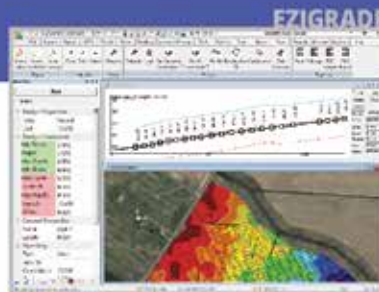
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Hello, from the New Team Member

By BRIAN DEERY, LICA Director of Government Relations

As you may know by now, Nick Yaksich has officially retired to spend more time at the Outer Banks of North Carolina and to work on his golf and pickleball games. He doesn't need to do much work there, as he's already perfected both pretty well over the years. I just hope he doesn't hustle too many unsuspecting duffers looking to cash in on a presumably easy mark.

I'm Brian Deery, and I'll be trying to fill Nick's shoes as LICA's Director of Government Relations in Washington, DC. After a 42-year career with the Associated General Contractors (AGC), working with civil, heavy, and highway contractors, I know a lot about your businesses and the impact that federal funding, regulations, and contract requirements can have on your success. I look forward to getting to know you and your markets better.

One Big, Beautiful Bill

President Trump moved quickly to implement many of his campaign promises. I've lost count of the multitude of executive orders he has issued that impact various government operations. In addition, Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) has been hard at work cutting government spending programs and reducing the federal workforce. It's hard to keep up with all the action.

The President's top four priorities—extending and enhancing the 2017 tax cuts, eliminating illegal immigration, “drill, baby, drill” to increase energy production, and enhancing defense—are still on deck. While Speaker Mike Johnson has successfully taken the first steps to implement Trump's agenda in the House budget resolution, getting 60 votes in the Senate to avoid a Democrat filibuster remains a challenge.

The President wants to bundle these issues into “one big, beautiful bill” (or possibly two) and pass it through the reconciliation process—a parliamentary procedure that allows legislation to pass with a simple majority vote. We'll need to keep our eyes on this one to ensure LICA priorities make the cut.

Highway Reauthorization

The current highway authorization legislation runs out in September 2026. However, if history is any guide, it's a long shot to think it will be completed and signed into law by that deadline. The last reauthorization bill was included as part

of the Biden Administration's Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which provided a large federal investment not only in highways and bridges but also in broadband and water infrastructure.

Congress is already looking ahead by holding hearings on reauthorization to address ongoing transportation issues. Highway construction groups, AASHTO, and others are focused on ensuring that the funding levels in the IIJA are used as the baseline—with additional investments included in a future bill.

Highway Trust Fund revenue continues to decline due to stagnant motor fuel taxes, more efficient vehicles, and increasing use of hybrids and electric vehicles. Legislation has already been introduced in both the House and Senate to implement a user fee on electric vehicles.

Farm Bill

Action on the Farm Bill is not currently on the radar for either Congress or the Administration. Last reauthorized in 2018, the legislation has been extended through September 30 of this year. That extension includes over \$30 billion in agriculture assistance—short of what the farming and ranching communities have been calling for.

The 2018 Farm Bill is long outdated, especially now that Congress has been kicking the can down the road for two years. The most recent USDA Census of Agriculture showed that the U.S. lost more than 141,000 farms across the country over a five-year period—that's roughly 77 farms a day.

Outlook

With the President and Republican-led Congress focused on shrinking the size of government and reducing federal spending, our work is cut out for us. My years of working on Capitol Hill and with federal agencies have taught me that it's crucial to make our case to your Senators and Representatives—often and loudly.

I look forward to working with you in this effort. ■

Brian Deery brings over 40 years of experience advocating for highway, heavy, and civil construction contractors before Congress and federal agencies. As LICA's Director of Government Relations, he keeps members informed about legislative and regulatory issues that impact the land improvement industry. If you have any questions, Brian's email is Deery5@gmail.com.



National LICA Benefits

Exclusive for LICA Members!

As a business owner, being a part of LICA conveys to your clients your dedication to land improvement and conservation, which is a trending topic that is growing in importance. By demonstrating to your clients that you are a LICA member, your business will become associated with a higher standard in the industry. The LICA logo and the mission behind our association lends credibility to your company.



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Providing benefits to employees is essential in the current job market. Retirement plans and health insurance are among the highest priorities, and your LICA Membership grants you access to these vital programs. Additionally, there are resources available that can help your business operate smoothly and efficiently.



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National LICA Website

LICANATIONAL.ORG

At LICA we pride ourselves on offering our members a plethora of benefits that help your business and family. The National LICA website, LICANational.org, is a benefit within itself - and is available 24/7.

- Sell & purchase used equipment
- Legislative Updates
- Upcoming event details
- State Chapter contact information
- And of course....full list of National Benefits



Scan the QR Code with your phone's camera to see the National LICA Benefits. Each benefit has a downloadable flyer that contains details on the benefit and contact information to get started.



Land Improvement Contractors of America
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National Membership Drive

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Iowa

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Apprenticeship Program	49
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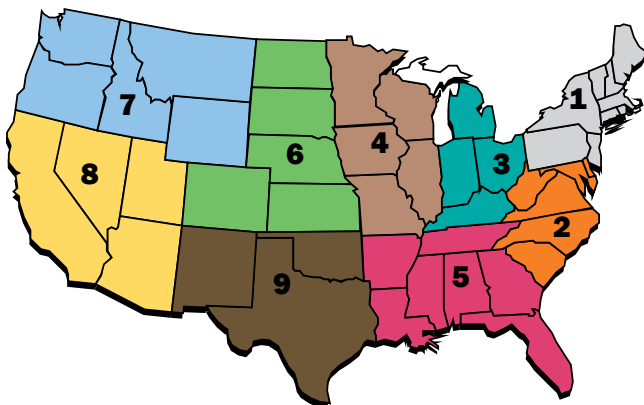
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■ ILLINOIS LICA

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■ MINNESOTA LICA

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Phone: 320-226-6398
Email: mnlica2@gmail.com



■ MISSOURI LICA

Andrea Rice
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