

THE LICA CONTRACTOR

Volume 19, Number 3

Fall 2026



Where Learning Meets the Dirt

A Seat at the Table

Before AI Changes the Job Plan



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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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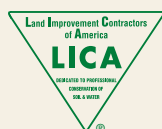
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The LICA Contractor welcomes letters, subject to editing for accuracy and brevity. The LICA Contractor also welcomes articles relevant to the land improvement industry. Include your name and daytime phone number for verification purposes. Deadlines are the twenty-first of the month preceding issue date. All unsolicited material must be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

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A Message From the CEO

Creating Value for Every Member

As CEO of National LICA, one question continues to guide me: **How do we create more value for every LICA member?**

Over the past several months, I have met with and listened to contractors, state leaders, industry partners, government agencies, educators, and organizations across our industry. Every conversation is different, but my objective remains the same: to identify opportunities that benefit our members and strengthen LICA.

I believe LICA is uniquely positioned to bring people together. Whether through new partnerships, member benefits, education, government relationships, or connections across our industry, we should always be looking for ways to help our members build stronger businesses and prepare for the future.

You will also see this philosophy reflected in our events.

As we look ahead to our 2027 National Convention in Arizona, our goal is to make it our most interactive and valuable convention yet. I want every contractor and partner who attends to leave with something tangible: new information, new relationships, new opportunities, and ideas they can put into action.

That is the standard I want us to continually ask ourselves: **What value are we creating for our members?**

LICA has tremendous knowledge, experience, and opportunity within its network. Our job at National is to connect those pieces and make that network work harder for you.

We have exciting opportunities ahead, and I look forward to continuing to build a stronger LICA together.

Dennis Mikula Jr., CEO, National LICA



Brand new Iowa LICA Farm Classroom facility in Melbourne, IA

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Where Learning Meets the Dirt

Iowa and Indiana LICA show how hands-on education connects contractors, conservation and the next generation.

By ALLISON HACK, Executive Vice President, National LICA

Hands-on education has long been an important part of LICA, giving contractors and industry professionals opportunities to see equipment, construction methods and conservation practices at work in real-world conditions.

Recent events in Iowa and Indiana offered two different examples of how State Chapters are continuing that tradition. Iowa LICA celebrated the opening of a new Farm Classroom at its Conservation and Demonstration Farm, creating a permanent home for year-round education, while Indiana LICA brought contractors, educators, manufacturers and guests into the field for two days of live tile drainage installation and demonstrations.

Although the settings were different, both brought education closer to the work contractors perform every day.

A New Home for Learning in Iowa

For more than two decades, the Iowa LICA Conservation and Demonstration Farm has provided a place where visitors can see conservation work in action.

Located near Melbourne, Iowa, approximately 15 miles from Marshalltown and 60 miles from Des Moines, the 80-acre property was purchased in 2000. Since then, Iowa LICA has developed the farm into a working educational site where contractors, agencies, students and members of the public can learn how conservation systems are constructed and how they perform over time.

The property receives water from a surrounding watershed of more than 1,000 acres. Iowa LICA reports that practices installed at the farm remove more than 50 percent of the phosphates and nearly all of the nitrates before the water leaves the property.

Many of those practices were installed during Iowa LICA Field Days, giving members and visitors an opportunity to see the work from installation through long-term operation.

The farm's educational capabilities have now expanded with the opening of a new Farm Classroom.

The completed building gives Iowa LICA an indoor, weather-protected location for meetings, workshops, contractor instruction, safety education and other programs throughout the year. It also gives conservation agencies, agricultural groups, schools,



“We are not only opening the doors to this facility, but to new opportunities, opportunities to educate the next generation, strengthen our membership, promote conservation, and continue serving Iowa with excellence.”
– Scott Bohle, Iowa LICA President



Ribbon cutting ceremony for the Iowa LICA Conservation and Demonstration Farm Classroom.

landowners and industry partners a place to meet before heading outside to see the conservation practices installed throughout the property.

That combination allows visitors to learn about the design, construction or purpose of a practice inside the classroom and then see an example operating under actual field conditions.

Iowa LICA celebrated the classroom's completion with a grand opening and open house that brought together contractor and associate members, representatives from USDA, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Agribusiness Association of Iowa, state officials, members of the media and community guests.

Following remarks and a ribbon-cutting ceremony, guided tours gave attendees a closer look at conservation projects installed during previous Field Days.

Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig praised the new facility and emphasized the role contractors play in putting conservation plans into action.

“People can talk about conservation, make plans and designs, but somebody has to get it on the ground,” Naig said. “LICA is the critical link in that equation.”

Iowa LICA President Scott Bohle also reflected on what the classroom will make possible for the association.

“We are not only opening the doors to this facility, but to new opportunities—opportunities to educate the next generation, strengthen our membership, promote conservation, and continue serving Iowa with excellence,” Bohle said.

The project came together through financial contributions from Iowa LICA contractor and associate members, along with members who donated labor, machinery, professional knowledge and other resources. A building committee developed the initial plans, and Iowa LICA's Board of Directors worked with Executive Director Kelby Kiefer and the project team throughout construction.

“I'm incredibly grateful to everyone who played a part in making this vision a reality,” Kiefer said. “Today, we celebrate a beautiful new facility. Tomorrow, we begin the work of filling it with purpose.”



Iowa LICA Farm Classroom Grand Opening



Indiana LICA Field Day Trench Rescue Demonstration

Indiana Takes Education to the Field

While Iowa LICA opened the doors to a permanent educational facility, Indiana LICA created a hands-on learning environment around an active drainage installation.

Contractors, industry professionals, educators and guests gathered July 21–22 at Purdue University’s Agronomy Center for Research and Education in West Lafayette for Indiana LICA’s Tile Drainage Installation Field Day.

After days of extreme heat and scattered thunderstorms leading up to the event, the weather cooperated for two hot but successful days in the field.

At the center of the event was the drainage installation itself.

Several crews and machines moved steadily across the field as tile plows installed drainage tile. Compact track loaders followed behind, pushing soil back over newly connected lines, while ground crews checked the work and kept the installation moving.

Attendees were able to watch the crews and equipment work side by side, providing a close look at the coordination involved in a large drainage project.

Small ATVs, trailers, golf carts and larger utility terrain vehicles transported attendees between the Agronomy Center and the active installation site. Volunteers and neighboring State Chapters also helped, including Michigan LICA, which brought a utility vehicle to assist with transportation throughout the event.

National LICA Executive Vice President Allison Hack, National LICA CEO Dennis Mikula Jr. and *LICA Contractor* Editor Caroline Krug attended the opening day.

Activities included a live in-trench rescue scenario conducted by the Lafayette Fire Department, along with educational discussions involving drainage maintenance, water recycling and other topics related to agricultural water management.

The shop served as a gathering place for educational sessions and lunch, while exhibitors set up tents and tables outside. Representatives from Ohio LICA were also onsite with a booth promoting the organization and connecting with attendees.

The field day was organized under the leadership of Indiana LICA Executive Director Nanci Gutwein and State Chapter President Keith Miller, with support from a group of volunteers who helped coordinate the site, educational schedule, transportation, demonstrations, meals and other day-of logistics.

Equipment, tile and other materials were contributed by participating pipe and equipment manufacturers and industry supporters. Those contributions gave attendees an opportunity to see installation work firsthand while spending time with contractors, manufacturers, educators and others involved in the drainage industry.

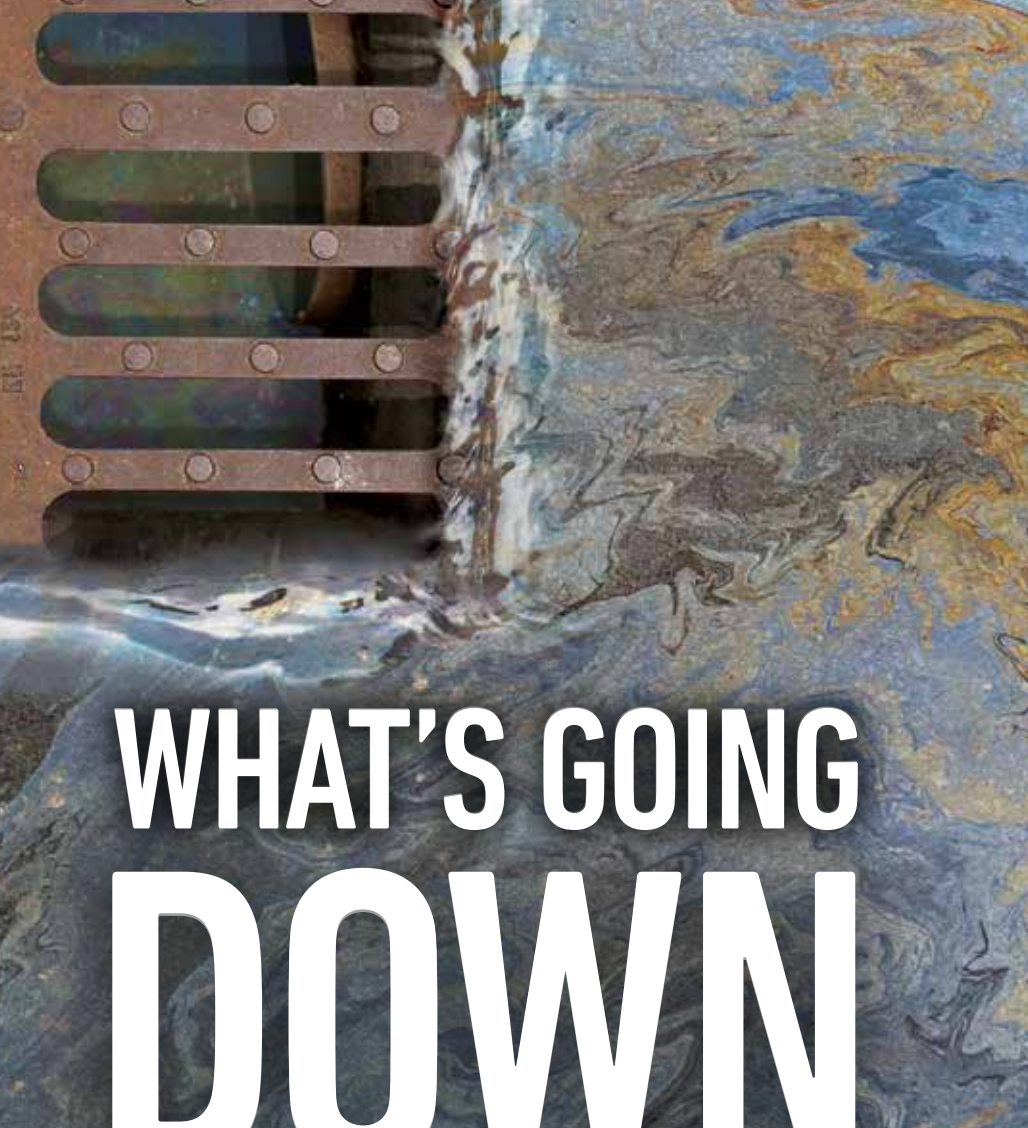
Learning by Seeing the Work

The Iowa Farm Classroom and Indiana Tile Drainage Installation Field Day took different approaches, but both created opportunities for people to learn while staying closely connected to the work taking place in the field.

In Iowa, visitors can now gather inside the Farm Classroom to discuss conservation practices before walking outside to see installations that have been operating on the property for years. In Indiana, attendees watched a drainage system being installed while crews, equipment and manufacturers were onsite to demonstrate how the work comes together.

Both also depended on cooperation.

Contractor and associate members contributed to the Iowa classroom through financial support, labor, equipment and professional knowledge. Indiana’s field day relied on contractors, volunteers, manufacturers, educators and neighboring



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A Seat at the Table: Strengthening LICA's Voice in a Changing North American Economy



By DENNIS MIKULA JR., CEO of National LICA

When I was invited to represent the Land Improvement Contractors of America at the inaugural session of the North American Trade Parliament in Oakland, California, I knew it would be an opportunity to bring LICA into a broader conversation. What I did not fully appreciate until I arrived was how closely those conversations would connect to the work our members do every day and how the experience would reinforce my view of LICA's future.

The North American Trade Parliament, an initiative of the Canada-U.S.-Mexico Trade Council, officially launched on August 19, 2026. It brings together business and economic organizations from local to national levels across the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

What impressed me most was not the size of the gathering or any single statistic, but the willingness of leaders from three countries, across industries and business communities, to sit together and ask an essential question: How can we work together to build a stronger business environment for everyone?

That spirit of collaboration matters because our economies and businesses are increasingly interconnected.

I had the opportunity to participate in a panel on nearshoring and its impact on our industry. Nearshoring is often discussed in the context of manufacturing, international trade, and supply chains. As a contractor, I see another side of it.

Economic investment ultimately becomes a physical project.

When a manufacturer expands, a company relocates production, or a community attracts new investment, someone must prepare the site. Land must be developed, earth moved, water and drainage issues addressed, and infrastructure and utilities installed.

LICA members are often among the first contractors to arrive at those sites.

As a contractor, I understand what economic development looks like long before a ribbon is cut. As CEO of National LICA, I also believe we have a responsibility to ensure that the contractors doing that work have a voice in the conversations that shape what comes next.

Nearshoring can create significant opportunities across North America, but opportunity alone is not enough. We need the infrastructure to support that growth and must continue developing the skilled workforce capable of building it.

That means recruiting people into our industry, developing their skills, embracing technology, and creating opportunities for the next generation. We cannot seriously discuss expanding manufacturing, strengthening supply chains, and investing in infrastructure without also addressing the people who will do the work.

My experience in Oakland also reinforced a broader point for me about LICA.

We are at a critical point in our evolution as an organization.

LICA represents contractors whose work spans infrastructure, agriculture, conservation, water management, excavation, site development, and economic growth. Yet people outside our industry still do not fully understand who LICA is or the important role our members play.

I see that as an opportunity.

If we want LICA to have a stronger voice in conversations like those at the North American Trade Parliament, we must continue strengthening our organization from within. We need to grow our membership, strengthen our state chapters, develop future leaders, expand relationships with industry and government, and become more effective at telling the story of what LICA contractors contribute to our economy.

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Organizational growth cannot be measured solely by the number of members on a roster. It should also be measured by the credibility we earn, the partnerships we build, the opportunities we create for members, and our ability to represent their interests in important conversations.

That is why opportunities such as the North American Trade Parliament matter.

They give LICA an opportunity to gain recognition not only across the United States but also among organizations and business communities in Canada and Mexico. Our members already operate in an economy where equipment, manufacturers, suppliers, materials, and business relationships cross borders. Building stronger relationships with our North American neighbors can create opportunities we may not yet see.

The North American Trade Parliament plans to continue this work through assemblies in Mexico, Canada, and the United States beginning in 2027. I want LICA to remain part of conversations like these.

But having a seat at the table comes with responsibility.

We must continue building an organization capable of bringing something meaningful to the table: our contractors' experience, the strength of our state chapters, the knowledge within our industry, and the collective voice of our membership.



Dennis Mikula, Jr., National LICA CEO, addresses the room at the NATP inaugural session.

I left Oakland encouraged about the possibilities for North American collaboration, but I also left reflecting on what is possible for LICA.

Our members help build the foundation for economic growth every day. Now we must continue building an organization strong enough to represent them wherever the future of that growth is discussed. ■

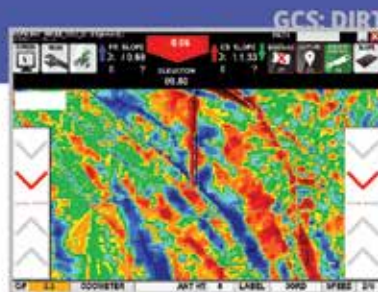
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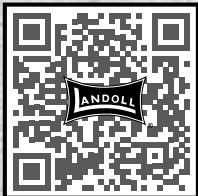
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Before AI Changes the Job Plan: A Verification Protocol for Land Improvement Contractors

By DR. GLEB TSIPURSKY, author of *The Psychology of AI Adoption at Work*

LICA members are already seeing AI show up in estimating software, equipment platforms, office systems, and everyday writing tools. It can organize information and speed up routine drafting. Every recommendation still has to match the actual job, the customer's scope, the equipment condition, and the people responsible for the work.

That standard fits LICA's mission of high workmanship standards, responsible resource management, and profitable land improvement enterprises. The useful question for a contractor is simple: Where can AI save time without getting ahead of the field facts?

Use AI Where You Can Check the Work Quickly

Start with work that has a reliable source and a knowledgeable reviewer.

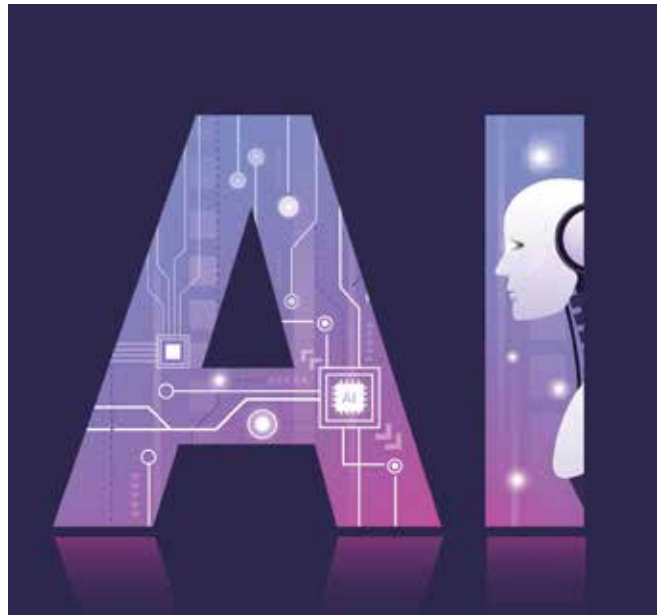
Proposal review. Give the tool the customer's written scope and your draft proposal. Ask it to flag missing items, unclear assumptions, inconsistent quantities, or questions that still need an answer. Then have the estimator or project manager compare every flag against the plans, site information, and customer request before anything changes.

Daily reports. Turn field notes into a cleaner first draft. AI can organize labor, equipment hours, deliveries, weather notes, delays, photographs, and work completed. The employee who observed the work should verify the date, quantities, directions received, and anything that could affect billing or a later change order.

Change-order documentation. AI can group notes, emails, photographs, and schedule impacts into a draft narrative. The project manager still needs to confirm what changed, who directed it, when it happened, and which costs or time impacts the company can support.

Equipment service records. AI can summarize maintenance histories and recurring descriptions so a mechanic or fleet manager can see patterns faster. Use that summary to prepare questions. Keep diagnosis, repair decisions, and equipment release with the qualified person who can inspect the machine.

These are practical uses because the source material already exists and the output can be checked quickly. *The LICA Contractor* regularly focuses on equipment, crews, productivity, costs, and changing industry conditions. Those same operating realities should control how a contractor uses AI.



Ask Four Questions Before the Output Leaves the Desk

A short check at the handoff can prevent a polished draft from turning into a bad job decision.

1. What source supports this? Keep the plans, notes, specifications, photographs, service records, or customer request beside the draft. If the source does not support a claim, treat it as an assumption that needs verification.

2. What came from observation, and what came from inference? “The crew recorded standing water at 7 a.m.” is a field observation. “The excavation is safe to enter” requires current site judgment from the right person. Do not let a smooth summary blur that difference.

3. Who owns the release? Match the reviewer to the stakes. Office staff can confirm names and formatting. Project managers can verify scope, cost, and schedule. Mechanics can evaluate equipment questions. Safety-critical work requires the person with the training and authority to make that decision.

4. What stays outside the tool's authority? Keep trench entry, protective systems, utility clearance, engineering decisions, legal obligations, employee discipline, and contractual commitments under explicit human control.

That last point matters because field conditions can change

quickly. OSHA requires a competent person to inspect trenches and excavations daily and as conditions change, and that person must have the authority to take corrective action. An AI-generated checklist can help organize information. It cannot perform that inspection or carry that authority.

Try This at Your Company: A Four-Week Daily Report Pilot

Pick one crew and one low-risk workflow: turning field notes into a draft daily report.

Before the pilot starts, agree on the source information the tool may use, the fields every report must contain, the claims it may not make, and the person who approves the final report.

For four weeks, track five things: preparation time, missing information, factual corrections, major rewrites, and whether the finished report helps with billing, customer communication, or change documentation.

Include one experienced skeptic and one practical early adopter. Ask the skeptic to look for missing context and unsafe assumptions. Ask the early adopter to refine the workflow and document what saves time. Their combined feedback will tell you more than prompt counts or login numbers.

At the end of four weeks, keep the workflow only if the finished reports are faster or clearer without creating more corrections, omissions, or rework. If the results are mixed, adjust the process before expanding it.

Keep the Field Decision With the Field Professional

AI can prepare a question, organize a record, compare two documents, or draft a summary. Contractors create value when experienced people connect that information to the actual site, customer, machine, crew, and responsibility in front of them.

Use AI selectively where it reduces administrative effort and where the right person can still verify the facts and own the decision. Start small, measure the finished work, and expand only when the evidence supports the next step. ■

Adapted from: *The Psychology of AI Adoption at Work: From Resistance to Results* (Georgetown University Press, 2026) <https://disasteravoidanceexperts.com/aibook>

Dr. Gleb Tsipursky, a behavioral scientist called the “Office Whisperer” by The New York Times, helps tech-forward leaders stop overpay-

ing for AI while boosting engagement and innovation. He serves as CEO of the AI consultancy Disaster Avoidance Experts and has written eight books, including The Psychology of AI Adoption at Work: From Resistance to Results (Georgetown University Press, 2026). <https://disasteravoidanceexperts.com/aibook>

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LICA Introduces New Wireless Benefit Through Helix Wireless

New program offers exclusive wireless pricing, dedicated support and access to all three major networks.

National LICA has partnered with Helix Wireless to offer LICA members a new telecommunications benefit designed to help contractors reduce wireless costs while simplifying the way they manage mobile service across their businesses.

Through the partnership, LICA members have access to exclusive wireless pricing, carrier-agnostic service across all three major wireless networks and dedicated account support. Helix

Wireless estimates that participating businesses can reduce their current wireless expenses by 30 to 50 percent, depending on their existing service and eligibility.

The program was developed with the needs of construction businesses in mind, including companies managing employees and devices across offices, fleets and multiple job sites. Rather than limiting members to a single carrier, Helix provides access to all three major networks, giving businesses greater flexibility to choose coverage and plans based on their individual needs.

Participating members also receive a dedicated point of contact to assist with plan design, device procurement, billing support and ongoing account optimization. Additional services include mobile device management, consolidated billing and reporting, equipment financing, white-glove onboarding and priority support from U.S.-based specialists. Helix also offers LICA members a no-cost telecom audit to identify potential savings.

Exclusive LICA member pricing begins at \$45 per line per month for businesses with five to 10 lines under the Custom Plan and decreases to \$35 per line for businesses with 25 or more lines. An Elite Plan with additional features and priority support is also available. A minimum of five lines is required to participate.

The benefit also includes free calling to more than 80 countries, providing another option for contractors whose employees, customers or business partners work internationally.

As an added benefit, qualifying LICA members who maintain active Helix service for nine months can receive up to \$325 toward their LICA membership dues, paid directly by Helix Wireless to National LICA.

All current LICA members are eligible to participate, subject to qualification, coverage and carrier availability. ■

For more information or to request a no-cost telecom audit, contact Mike Eliades, Director of Business Development at Helix Wireless, at 908-323-4223 or mike.eliades@helixwireless.co.





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LICA Announces Marsh McLennan Agency as National Insurance Partner

A National Partnership Built to Serve Every LICA Contractor

LICA is excited to announce a new partnership with Marsh McLennan Agency, which will serve as the National LICA Insurance Partner and the Presenting Sponsor of the 2027 National LICA Winter Convention.

This partnership represents an important step forward in LICA's commitment to providing greater value, stronger resources, and best-in-class solutions to our members across the country.

One of LICA's greatest strengths is the diversity of the contractors we represent. Our members work across numerous sectors and specialties, operate businesses of vastly different sizes, and serve communities throughout the United States. Finding an insurance partner that can understand and serve that entire membership was critical.

Marsh McLennan Agency brings the national reach, industry expertise, resources, and capabilities to serve LICA contractors in all 50 states, across the services our members provide, and across businesses of all sizes.

A Message from Marsh McLennan Agency

"We are incredibly excited to serve as LICA's National Insurance Partner and proud to be the Presenting Sponsor of the Winter Conference! We look forward to building strong relationships with LICA members of all sizes across the country, providing valuable resources and insurance solutions, and—most importantly—being a trusted partner for years to come. We can't wait to kick things off, see everyone at the Winter Conference, and have a little fun along the way!"

Marisa Elrod, Assistant Vice President

Charlie Page, Senior Vice President



Continued on page 18





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A Message from National LICA CEO

"What makes Marsh McLennan Agency such a perfect fit for National LICA is their ability to serve our entire membership. LICA contractors operate in all types of markets, provide a wide range of services, and range from small family-owned businesses to some of the largest contractors in the industry. Marsh McLennan Agency has the national reach to represent members in all 50 states, across every service our contractors provide, and at every business size."

"As we continue building a stronger National LICA, we want partners who can grow with us and deliver meaningful value to every contractor we represent. Marsh McLennan Agency gives us that opportunity. We're extremely excited to welcome them as the National LICA Insurance Partner and Presenting Sponsor of our Winter Conference, and we believe this is the beginning of a tremendous long-term partnership for our members and our organization."

Dennis Mikula Jr.

CEO, National LICA

Built for the Entire LICA Membership

This partnership goes beyond insurance. LICA and Marsh McLennan Agency intend to build a relationship focused on education, resources, risk management, insurance solutions, and long-term value for LICA members.

Whether you operate a small family business or a large multi-state contracting operation, the vision is the same: every LICA member should have access to a national insurance partner with the capabilities and resources to understand their business and support their needs.

Members will have the opportunity to meet the Marsh McLennan Agency team and learn more about the resources and insurance solutions available through this new partnership at the upcoming 2027 National LICA Winter Convention, where Marsh McLennan Agency will officially join us as the event's Presenting Sponsor.

We look forward to introducing Charlie, Marisa, and the Marsh McLennan Agency team to the LICA family and kicking off what we believe will become an outstanding long-term partnership. ■

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The Additional Insured Requirement: A Small Detail With Big Consequences

By CRAIG MARTIN, Construction Attorney with Lamson Dugan and Murray, LLP

A subcontractor's insurance certificate may seem like routine paperwork, but when a subcontractor's work damages a project, that paperwork can determine who pays the bill.

General contractors should require subcontractors to name the general contractor as an **additional insured** under the subcontractor's commercial general liability policy. This can provide the general contractor with insurance protection for claims arising from the subcontractor's work and help ensure that the subcontractor's insurer participates in defending and resolving those claims.

Consider a project where a subcontractor was hired to install the storm sewer. The subcontractor improperly installed a section of the system, resulting in significant water intrusion that damaged portions of the newly constructed building. The owner made a substantial claim against the general contractor for the resulting damage.

Although the subcontract required the subcontractor to name the general contractor as an additional insured, the general contractor never confirmed that the required endorsement had actually been obtained. When the general contractor sought the subcontractor's participation in settlement discussions, the subcontractor refused. This left the general contractor to address the claim under its own insurance rather than having the benefit of coverage under the subcontractor's policy.

The lesson is simple: **A contractual requirement is not enough.** General contractors should obtain and review the actual additional insured endorsement before work

begins and verify that the required coverage is in place. A few minutes of insurance verification can prevent a costly dispute when something goes wrong. ■

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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.



Midterm Elections Could Determine Outlook for Infrastructure Funding, Farm Relief and Regulatory Reform

By BRIAN DEERY, LICA Director of Government Relations

With only a few weeks remaining before the country goes to the polls for the midterm elections, much is at stake, and it's unclear how the outcome will impact funding and regulatory reform for infrastructure programs and the outlook for a variety of other construction markets.

The 2026 midterm elections on November 3 are a competition for control of Congress and what gets accomplished over the next two years. While the Republican Party currently controls the Senate and House, the margins are very

closely divided. All 435 House seats are up for election, with 218 members needed to hold the majority. Republicans currently hold 218 seats, with an additional independent member caucusing with Republicans for 219 operational votes. Democrats hold 212 seats, and there are five vacancies. In the Senate, Republicans hold a 53-47 advantage, including two independents. There are 35 Senate seats up in 2026, including special elections in Florida and Ohio, of which 23 are held by Republicans.



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Grinnell Mutual, based in Grinnell, Iowa, has been around since 1909, and works with thousands of independent agents in the 12 states of its territory. The company is excited to work with LICA members and the opportunity to add the LICA program to its industry-leading contractor coverages.

The Grinnell Mutual program will be available to LICA members in the following states: Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, Missouri, Indiana, Illinois, South Dakota, North Dakota, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

LICA members can access the state LICA insurance program in three ways:

Talk to a local Grinnell Mutual agent and ask for a quote inside the state LICA insurance program.

1

Visit grinnellmutual.com/find-an-agent and search for a Grinnell Mutual agent in their area.

2

Ask their non-Grinnell Mutual agent to contact Prins Insurance directly for a quote.

3

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While President Trump isn't on the ballot, the midterms have traditionally been a referendum on the administration in power. Although the Senate map still favors Republicans holding on to the chamber, President Trump's declining approval ratings, frustration with the war in Iran and rising prices have pushed a number of GOP-held seats into play. Democrats need to flip four seats to take control of the Senate while holding onto all current Democratic seats. The Cook Political Report, an independent election prognosticator, reports that Democratic voters have turned out in stronger numbers than Republicans in the primaries this spring and summer, showing a potential enthusiasm gap when it comes to voting in the general election. On the other hand, national Republican PACs have funds available that far exceed the amounts held by the various national Democratic PACs.

In a typical election cycle, only a small fraction, usually fewer than 10% to 16%, of the 435 House seats are considered genuinely competitive. This fall, even fewer congressional contests are expected to be competitive, and experts say the extraordinary mid-decade redistricting efforts initiated by President Trump are largely to blame. According to the Cook Political Report, only 18 House races are considered toss-ups.

With so much at stake in this election, Congress took an extended August recess and will be in session for only three weeks after returning in September before members head home for further campaigning. Prior to leaving for the recess, both the House and Senate took action to pass a continuing resolution (CR) to keep the government open

until mid-December. Each chamber passed a different version of the legislation, so a compromise bill will have to be approved before September 30. Given the potential electoral consequences of not keeping the government open, dealmaking is expected to rule the day.

Many key issues that impact LICA members remain unresolved, including the farm bill, farm relief, year-round use of E15 fuel blends, reauthorization of the highway bill, continued funding for water and wastewater programs, expansion of H-2B visa caps, reform of the H-2A visa program, completion of reforms to the definition of Waters of the United States, and the list goes on. It remains to be seen how motivated Congress will be to complete action on these important issues in a lame-duck session. Should there be a dramatic change in control of the House, Senate or both, Democrats may be willing to wait until 2027 to address these issues.

November 3 will be an important day for LICA members. Don't miss the opportunity to express your opinion at your polling place. ■

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.

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MUNICIPAL COMMERCIAL INDUSTRIAL

Market Watch

RB Global to Acquire BigIron, Accelerating Strategic Expansion into U.S. Agriculture



RB Global, Inc. announced that it has entered into a definitive agreement to acquire Big Iron Auction Company (“BigIron”), accelerating the Company’s strategic expansion into U.S. agriculture.

Big Iron is a scaled, agriculture-focused online marketplace connecting buyers and sellers of agricultural equipment, land, live-stock, and other farm and ranch assets. Embedded in the communities it serves across rural America, Big Iron’s digital platform is trusted by farmers, landowners, and rural contractors.

“Big Iron brings a talented team with deep ag sector knowledge and an established sales footprint that will continue operating as a stand-alone brand while being complemented by the Ritchie Bros. industrial footprint. This will create opportunities to serve even more customers through a combination of onsite, offsite, and digital channels and solutions,” said Jim Kessler, Chief Executive Officer of RB Global.

“We are proud of our team’s tremendous work to establish Big Iron as a leading auction marketplace for farmers, landowners, and rural businesses,” said Mark Stock, Co-Founder of Big Iron. “RB Global values our culture and shares our respect for the agricultural community. Through this combination, we gain a larger platform and additional resources, which is expected to help us deliver even greater choice and liquidity to all the sellers we serve.”

Ron Stock, Co-Founder of Big Iron, said, “Since our founding in 1984, we have remained steadfast in our commitment to providing an honest, trustworthy auction. We look forward to continuing our mission to serve our sellers, buyers, and employees for years to come, and to continue operating Big Iron as a stand-alone brand with Mark and I involved in the business as usual.”

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Calling All Contractors: Share Your Expertise in The LICA Contractor!

Have you ever wanted to share your insights, experiences, or innovative projects with the broader LICA community? Now is your chance! The LICA Contractor magazine is calling for submissions from our valued readers like you. Whether you're a seasoned professional, a passionate newcomer, or an industry enthusiast, we invite you to contribute your article ideas and photos for a chance to be featured in an upcoming issue.

Why Submit to The LICA Contractor Magazine?

1. **Showcase Your Expertise:** Share your insights, experiences, and best practices with fellow land improvement professionals across the nation.
2. **Gain Recognition:** Get your name and your work in front of a dedicated readership of industry insiders, contractors, and enthusiasts.
3. **Contribute to the Community:** Help cultivate a vibrant exchange of ideas and knowledge within the LICA community.
4. **Inspire Others:** Your stories and photos have the power to inspire and educate others in the industry, sparking new ideas and approaches.

What We're Looking For:

- **Feature Articles:** Share your expertise on topics such as best practices, industry trends, project highlights, and innovation in land improvement.

- **Case Studies:** Dive deep into specific projects, challenges faced, solutions implemented, and lessons learned
- **Photo Submissions:** Capture the beauty and complexity of land improvement projects through striking photographs.
- **Success Stories:** Inspire others with stories of triumph, innovation, and collaboration in the field.
- **Tips and Tricks:** Offer practical advice, tips, and tricks to help fellow contractors excel in their work.

How to Submit:

- **Article Ideas:** Send in a brief outline or description of your proposed article.
- **Photos:** Share high-resolution images capturing the essence of LICA
- **Contact Details:** Include your name, contact information, and a brief bio.

Email Your Submissions to:

Caroline Krug, Editor,
editor@licanational.org

Subject Line:

The LICA Contractor –
Article Submission or
The LICA Contractor – Photo Submission

Selected submissions will be featured in upcoming issues, so don't miss out on this fantastic opportunity to be part of The LICA Contractor magazine!

AEM and CGA Partner to Expand 811 Safety Messaging

The Association of Equipment Manufacturers (AEM) and Common Ground Alliance (CGA) are joining forces to put an important safety reminder directly in front of equipment operators: contact 811 before you dig.

The organizations recently adopted a Statement of Shared Principles focused on advancing safe digging awareness, consistent industry guidance and best practices for working around underground infrastructure. As an early step in the partnership, AEM and CGA are recommending that manufacturers place an 811-reminder decal on new non-highway equipment that could unintentionally strike underground utilities.

Under the recommendation, the decal could appear on applicable new equipment sold in the United States by August 2027. The goal is simple: give operators a visible reminder to have underground utilities located and marked before work begins.

The need remains significant. An estimated 245,129 incidents of damage to underground infrastructure were reported nationwide in 2025. Utility strikes can interrupt electric, gas, telecommunications and other critical services while also putting equipment operators, workers and bystanders at risk.

The initiative extends beyond traditional construction sites. Agricultural equipment can also encounter underground lines in fields, farmyards and rural rights-of-way, making safe-digging practices important across the industries that build, feed and power communities.

AEM and CGA say the decal initiative is only an early example of their broader collaboration. The organizations plan to continue working together to expand safety education, encourage consistent guidance and provide practical tools that help equipment owners and operators prevent underground utility damage. ■



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The LICA Contractor



Quarterly publication featuring contractor stories, industry news & National LICA updates

- Contractor project features & industry highlights
- Legislative & legal updates impacting members
- Included with National LICA membership

Caroline Krug | ckrug@licanational.org

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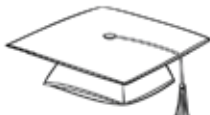
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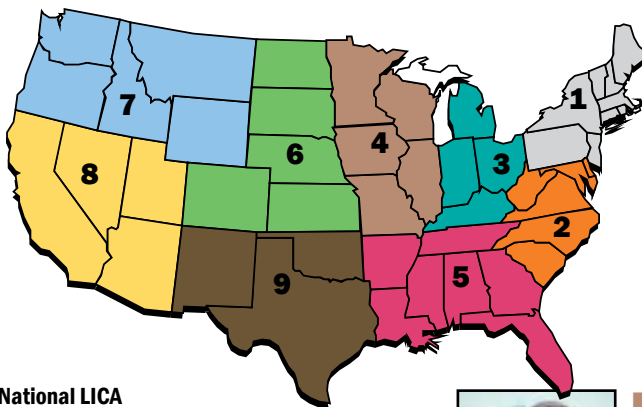
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How You Inherit Is More Important Than How Much You Inherit

By GREG GRECO, MBA, CEP, Greco & Associates Financial Services

For many years, the federal estate tax hit broadly enough and cut deeply enough that “estate planning” came to be associated with having enough wealth to trigger an estate tax bill. By contrast, the estate tax exemptions are so high these days that very few Americans are affected. According to the IRS, about 6,000 estate tax returns were filed in 2021 of which less than half had a tax liability.

But just because an estate is too small to get taxed doesn’t mean it is too small to cause problems for the heirs. Those problems range from heirs being ill-equipped to handle wealth to sibling rivalries exploding into full-fledged family warfare after Mom and Dad are gone. And, of course, there is the almost universal problem of wealth being dissipated by divorce or lawsuits.

Of course, you could just take the position that your kids will have to figure things out on their own. Instead, consider the differences between your circumstances and those of your children and especially your grandchildren. Costs for higher education and health care continue to explode, the national debt keeps growing, the number of lawsuits and divorces has never been higher, and the combination of globalization and artificial intelligence is turning entire economies upside down.

As parents, you can do something for your children that they cannot do for themselves: make their assets more valuable by protecting them from future events such as failed marriages, family feuds, lawsuits and bankruptcies. The key is to recognize a basic truth: You can’t lose anything you don’t own.

Trusted Tools

Give your heirs the benefit of wealth without direct ownership. The way to do this is by use of a trust. As a separate legal entity, a well-constructed trust cannot be forced to give up assets if the beneficiary is sued, divorced or declares bankruptcy. At the same time, the trustee can have broad authority to make assets of the trust available for the use and enjoyment of the beneficiary.

If you have full confidence in the ability of your heirs to handle inherited wealth

responsibly, it is to the benefit of such heirs to inherit the wealth in trust. In such cases, a trust can be constructed so that it makes the heir a trustee with primary managerial and investment control of trust assets owned by the trust. An independent trustee is required to make any distributions to the heir, but the heir can have the independent trustee removed and replaced at any time.

Even if the federal estate tax is irrelevant for your situation, consider seeing a skilled estate planning attorney to discuss the best way to leave wealth to heirs. The planning that results could have benefits for generations.

If you have questions, we are here to help. Greg Greco is a Certified Estate Planner at Greco & Associates Financial Services, greg@grecofinancial.com, (319) 234-5723.

The following case studies can help you understand more about the solutions available. Then talk to your financial advisor about your next steps.

CASE STUDY 1

In 2012, Mark came back to his hometown to join his father’s construction business. After getting his degree in construction management, Mark had spent seven years working for one of the country’s largest commercial construction companies. That experience had a profound effect on his dad’s business; revenue more than doubled over the next two years and then doubled again.

In 2015, Mark’s dad gave him 25 percent of the stock in the company and executed a buy-sell agreement to make sure Mark would be able to buy the rest of the stock at some point in the future. At that time, the gifted stock was valued at \$1.25 million.

In 2017, Mark’s wife gave up trying to adjust to the small town life. She filed for divorce and moved back to the city where she and Mark met. Mark’s 25 percent interest in the company, now valued at \$2.5 million, was divided between both spouses. As a result, Mark’s dad is borrowing \$1.25 million from the bank to buy back half of the stock he gifted to his son two years ago.

CASE STUDY 2

Frank and Corrine had been married 55 years when they died within six months of each other in 1998. They were survived by their three children, nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Apart from modest bequests of cash, Frank and Corrine’s great legacy was Stone Harbor Island, a 168-acre private island off the coast of Washington State. Their children and then their grandchildren grew up spending their summers on Stone Harbor boating, fishing, hiking, and hunting.

Frank and Corrine left the title to Stone Harbor to each of their three children and their spouses in equal, undivided shares. The three families continued to use the island as a summer getaway, including planning one week when everyone who could from all three families showed up for a reunion.

In 2006, Frank and Corrine’s youngest son was killed in an automobile accident. His share of Stone Harbor went to his widow, Beth. When Beth remarried 18 months later, her new husband and stepchildren started using Stone Island as well. It wasn’t long before complaints were being raised about how roughly those kids used the boats and other gear, and how much trash Beth and her new family left behind.

Things came to a head in 2009, when Beth’s husband not only lost his job but also had most of his investments wiped out in the aftermath of the financial crisis. Beth was unable to pay her one-third share of the taxes and maintenance fees for Stone Harbor that year, or the next year, or the next. Frank and Corrine’s surviving children offered to buy out her interest, but they were unable to agree on what it was worth. Worse still, Beth and her husband lost their house to foreclosure in 2012 and took up year-round residence on Stone Island.

The families are now locked in a long-term, expensive series of lawsuits. The facilities on Stone Harbor are falling into severe disrepair, and Frank and Corrine’s grandchildren and great-grandchildren haven’t visited their summer getaway for years. ■



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