

## Q &amp; A

# How Will Trump Help and Hurt Roofers?

NRCA's new CEO offers his take, along with how to address future challenges

BY GARY THILL

**At a time of political** upheaval and uncertainty, the National Roofing Contractors Association (NRCA) has turned to two-term Rep. Reid Ribble as its new CEO. A roofing contractor by trade, Ribble previously served on several NRCA committees as well as board chairman and president of The Roofing Industry Alliance for Progress' Board of Trustees. In 2010, Ribble was elected to Wisconsin's 8th Congressional District. While in Congress, he made headlines for refusing to support then-candidate Trump for president. Here's a look at his vision for NRCA, including how the Trump administration can help—and hurt—roofers.

*Editor's note: To read the full interview, visit <http://go.hw.net/roofers>.*

**Q: As the new CEO of NRCA, what is your vision for the industry?**

A: I believe there are far more things the industry agrees on than not. The entire industry, from the suppliers of raw materials to manufacturers, distributors, design community, contractors, and customers, will benefit when we speak as one voice.

We also have a stake in a larger, better trained, and more productive workforce. For some reason construction workers in the United States are no longer viewed positively in society. The men and women who choose to install roofs for a living work in hostile weather conditions and in many cases a dangerous work environment. They deserve our respect and I intend to speak out loudly on their behalf.

**Q: How do you see the new Trump administration helping the industry?**

A: President Trump has already made some moves to help the roofing industry,

especially in the area of regulations. I believe he will begin to remove some of the obstacles that the federal government has put in place that make it more difficult on our members to grow their companies.

He is also sending positive signals in relation to our overly complicated tax code with an emphasis on lower rates and dramatic simplification. There is no logical reason for roof depreciation to be set at 39 years when actual performance is about half of that. We are hopeful that the administration will work with Congress to correct flaws in the tax code like that one.



**Q: How do you see the new Trump administration hindering the industry?**

A: It appears that many in his administration have little to no understanding of today's workforce issues as it relates to legal immigration and construction. President Trump's own past incendiary rhetoric about illegal immigrants has not

been helpful. He needs to reinforce his support for an improved legal process for immigrants to come to the United States. Our economy cannot expand much without a growing and productive workforce. Legal immigration has always spurred our economy forward and 200-plus years of history bear this out.

**Q: What is your biggest concern as you look toward the future?**

A: Changing demographics. Like most first-world countries, the United States is facing an aging population and declining birth rates. This is a significant threat to our economy and industry. If policymakers and industry leaders do not begin to recognize this change, we will likely be on the outside looking in at countries and industries who have.

**Q: What should the industry do to improve the market?**

A: The industry must come together with a national emphasis on workforce training. This year, NRCA is launching a major national initiative to provide this training with certifications to those workers who can demonstrate core competencies in specific roof systems. This effort in my opinion will improve worker productivity, safety, and roof system quality.

**Q: What advice do you have for roofers?**

A: When someone asks you what you do, stand up tall, look them in the eye, and say "I am a roofer!" Ultimately we must understand a basic concept of human relationships: We cannot expect someone to respect us, and what we do, if we don't respect ourselves. The work that roof system installers do every day is significant to our economy and well-being. Be proud!