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**STATEMENT: House Vote on Project Labor Agreements Helps Small Business**

RICHMOND, Feb. 21, 2012 -- Nicole Riley, state director of the National Federation of Independent Business, today praised the House of Delegates for voting "yes" on Senate Bill 242, a bill to prevent state government from imposing costly and anti-competitive project labor agreements on state construction projects.

The Senate is expected to vote soon on the House version of the bill, House Bill 33.

"The Fair and Open Competition in Government Contracting Act ensures that all qualified contractors and their skilled workers, regardless of labor affiliation, can compete on a level playing field for Virginia construction projects," Riley said.

"By ensuring government neutrality in contracting, taxpayers get construction projects at the best possible price by increasing competition, and that reduces waste and eliminates favoritism in contracting," she said.

"The bill does not get rid of project labor agreements," Riley said. "Contractors may voluntarily enter into PLAs if they feel such an agreement can make their business competitive and deliver the best product to the government.

"But government-mandated agreements are anti-competitive and unfairly discourage many qualified small businesses from bidding on projects being paid with their own tax dollars," she said. "With barely 5 percent of Virginia's private construction workers belonging to a union, a government-mandated PLA sends jobs to out-of-state labor unions.

"We especially thank Delegates Barbara Comstock, Tim Hugo, **David Ramadan** and Sen. Mark Obenshain for sponsoring this legislation and working on behalf of Virginia's small businesses to create a level playing field for everyone," Riley said.

NFIB/Virginia is the commonwealth's leading small-business association.

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