



## [ GREATER BATON ROUGE INDUSTRY ALLIANCE ]

# Collaboration leads to win-win solutions

**FOR 50 YEARS**, the Greater Baton Rouge Industry Alliance has helped drive workforce development, safety performance and economic competitiveness across the region. Established in 1970 as a response to industrial managers' need for a competitive, skilled workforce and safe operations, GBRIA now represents more than 70 petrochemical and other industrial manufacturers. GBRIA's accomplishments from the past five decades are visible in workplaces, classrooms and local communities throughout south Louisiana.

South Louisiana boasts a highly skilled, world-class craft workforce, due in large part to GBRIA's leadership and efforts to ensure workers have relevant skills and credentials and to develop a continuing pipeline of skilled workers to support the region's economic growth. Through GBRIA, industry members worked with state government to increase funding for Louisiana community and technical colleges and develop vital training and curricula for craft workers. GBRIA led efforts to include industry-based certifications as part of the state's high school curriculum and provided guidance in estab-

lishing Louisiana's innovative Jump Start program, which enables high school students to take courses such as pipefitting and welding and earn industry credentials. Illustrating the organization's collaborative approach to workforce development, GBRIA helped establish and fund operation of the Associated Builders and Contractors Craft Training Center, where each year more than 1,000 people earn certificates as boilermakers, pipefitters, electricians, welders and more.

"GBRIA has been instrumental in bringing together industry, contractors, government, unions, educators and local communities to grow the craft workforce," says Connie Fabre, GBRIA president and CEO.

GBRIA also has played a pioneering role in improving safety standards. Working with Alliance Safety Council, GBRIA introduced safety and training programs that safeguard workers while reducing costs and increasing efficiency. With support from GBRIA, industrial employers share best practices and work with contractors to continuously focus on safety improvements. As a result, the safety record

at Baton Rouge plants is significantly better than the national average.

GBRIA has been central in addressing issues that affect quality of life in local communities, as well. Collaborating with the Baton Rouge Area Chamber and the Center for Planning Excellence, GBRIA helped form the Capital Region Industry for Sustainable Infrastructure Solutions (CRISIS) to tackle the region's transportation challenges. These efforts led to a \$1.7 billion appropriation for area infrastructure. Major projects, such as the I-10 widening in Ascension Parish and a new exit at Washington Street, have been prioritized and are under construction.

With GBRIA's leadership, the connection between industry and the community has grown stronger. Many plants have operated in Baton Rouge for more than 50 years and GBRIA has raised awareness of the value industry brings to the region, such as through job opportunities, economic impact and community investment. Industry supports many community initiatives from United Way to teacher education.

"In GBRIA's first strategic plan in 2005, recognizing the community as a

more active stakeholder was a priority," Fabre says. "Industry now works much more in partnership with our local communities."

Looking to the future, GBRIA sponsored the Tec Next conference in 2019, bringing together industry and technology leaders to develop partnerships and highlight how technology continues to transform the industry, such as using augmented reality in training, automated hydroblasting to reduce injuries and drones to conduct inspections. Digital technologies will transform industry to improve safety performance, reliability and profitability. Such revolutionary change will affect how workers do their jobs and the types of jobs available. It also will affect economic development across the region, with south Louisiana primed to become "Silicon Bayou," Fabre says.

"Tec Next may become a big partnership between industry and other organizations, such as BRAC, technical and community colleges, and government agencies," she says. "It's what GBRIA is about: collaborating to move everyone forward for win-win solutions." ■

### AT A GLANCE

**PRIMARY PRODUCT/SERVICE:** Trade association whose mission is adding value to the community by driving solutions to common issues with an emphasis on workforce development and safety performance. • **TOP EXECUTIVE:** Connie Fabre, President and CEO  
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