FARA INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS FILING

Title:
America needs thousands of blue-collar workers to manufacture our AI future

Author:
Rob Portman

Publication:
Fox News

Publication Date:
08/13/2026

URL:
https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/america-needs-thousands-blue-collar-workers-manufacture-ai-future

FARA DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

This material is distributed by Keybridge Communications on behalf of the Faith Whittlesey Society. Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.

Notes:

This material was originally published by an independent media outlet.

OPINION

America needs thousands of blue-collar workers to manufacture our AI future

Electricians, welders and HVAC technicians are in short supply as data center spending hits $700B

By Rob Portman OPINION Fox News

Published August 13, 2026 5:00am EDT

DHS demands California hand over illegal immigrant accused of killing retiree

The future of artificial intelligence may depend less on coders than on construction workers, electricians and factory technicians.

Tech companies are pouring money into new artificial intelligence (AI) data centers at an astounding clip, with Alphabet, Microsoft, Meta and Amazon expected to spend roughly $700 billion this year alone. And that doesn't include the costs of grid modernization and semiconductor capacity. But those ambitions keep running into the same problem — there aren't enough skilled workers to build the infrastructure that will power the AI economy.

By one estimate, the United States will need 140,000 additional skilled trades workers like electricians, HVAC technicians, welders and construction workers by 2030 to support AI infrastructure. How will we meet that demand?

A SOUTHERN STATE JUST TOOK THE TOP SPOT IN ONE OF THE WORLD'S FASTEST-GROWING INDUSTRIES

The answer may lie across the Atlantic — in Switzerland. That nation's apprenticeship system has helped build one of the world's most innovative economies. And it's achieved this by creating clear pathways into skilled technical careers for generations of young people.

More From Fox News


Sherrill drops head-turning voter ID declaration in wake of registration fiasco: 'Significant shift'


Jessica Alba rocks animal-print bikini as she shares glimpse into summer with Danny Ramirez


Blakeman cuts into Hochul's New York governor's race lead in new poll, as likely voters give DSA...


Race called in GOP primary to replace Tim Walz as governor in November


Kaia Gerber owns 'nepo baby' status while questioning other celebrity kids: 'Show me why you...


Large chunk of ice the size of Manhattan breaks away from glacier and forms icy island in...

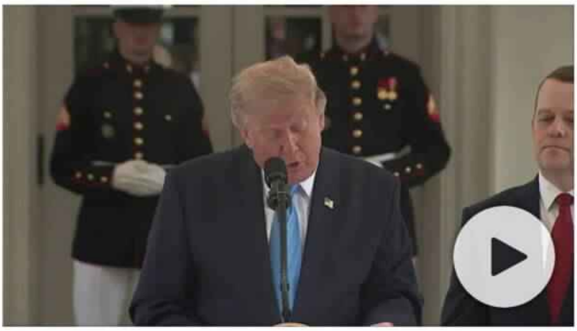
Apprentice linemen train in transformer bank construction at CenterPoint's Hiram O. Clarke Training Center in Houston on Wednesday, Nov. 12, 2025. (Raquel Natalicchio/Houston Chronicle/Getty Images)

At a moment when America's AI ambitions are colliding with labor shortages, a Swiss-style model may offer exactly the kind of workforce pipeline the United States needs.

Switzerland's Vocational Education and Training system — or apprenticeship model, as it's commonly known — allows students as young as 15 to apprentice at companies across the country. These young people gain hands-on experience in the workplace while also developing industry-specific skills in the classroom.

The system has proven wildly popular, with roughly 70% of each Swiss age cohort participating in apprenticeship programs in industries ranging from manufacturing and pharmaceuticals to construction, banking and healthcare. Crucially, these pathways are not educational dead ends. In fact, after completing their apprenticeships, students can either remain in their field or continue on to a university degree.

For companies, these apprenticeships are often sound investments, earning an average internal rate of return of 7% to 10%. They are also self-sustaining, as many apprentices end up staying with the firms where they trained, helping businesses recruit and develop new talent.



And since these programs are largely directed by private companies, they tend to align closely with the needs of the labor market. In this way, employers are able to teach apprentices the most relevant skills, allowing training programs to adapt quickly in fast-changing industries and helping companies fill critical workforce gaps.

This kind of model could help address the United States' current labor shortages.

After all, demand for these workers is only going to grow. Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang recently predicted "six-figure salaries for people who are building chip factories or computer factories or AI factories." At the same time, many young Americans are gravitating toward more vocational work and trade schools — particularly amid rising higher-education costs and an increasingly uncertain white-collar job market.

ALL HANDS ON DECK: THE UNLIKELY WORKFORCE THAT CAN REBUILD AMERICA'S FLEET

Companies can build on that momentum — not just by offering higher pay, but by investing in Swiss-style apprenticeship programs. Some states are already doing exactly that.

> **For companies, these apprenticeships are often sound investments, earning an average**

Inside Kennedy's wild Hawaiian wedding: Custom dress blunders, split dance floors, and unscripted Lanai moments.

> **internal rate of return of 7% to 10%.**

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE FOX NEWS OPINION]

Colorado's CareerWise program, which was modeled in part on the Swiss system, allows students to split time between the classroom and paid apprenticeships in industries ranging from advanced manufacturing to information technology. Similar programs are beginning to spread to other states as employers search for new ways to build long-term talent pipelines.

[CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD THE FOX NEWS APP]

The next era of digital technology won't just depend on software and computing power — but on the workers needed to wire data centers, install electrical systems and construct the physical backbone of the AI economy. Switzerland has spent decades cultivating that workforce. America can learn from that example.

Republican Rob Portman represented Ohio in the U.S. Senate from 2011 to 2023.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/14/2026 10:13:45 AM