

Testimony by Mike Rowe
CEO, mikeroweWORKS Foundation
Before the
House Committee on Natural Resources
Oversight hearing on *“American Energy Jobs: Opportunities for Skilled Trades Workers.”*
April 29, 2014

The mikeroweWORKS Foundation is a non-profit, public foundation that focuses on promoting alternative education, skilled trades, US manufacturing and entrepreneurship. Today I plan to focus on the stigmas and stereotypes currently associated with skilled labor and alternative education that are impacting the ability for US companies to hire qualified workers.

mikeroweWORKS was launched in 2008 as a Trade Resource Center for people seeking employment opportunities in the skilled trades. The initiative grew from my hit TV show, *Dirty Jobs with Mike Rowe*, and quickly turned into a grassroots PR Campaign for hard work and skilled labor.

As mikeroweWORKS began to challenge the stigmas and stereotypes that surround “alternative education,” we continue to focus on and advocate for millions of available jobs that require a “hands-on” skill. There is in our nation a widening skills gap, the emerging student loan crisis, and the ever-changing perceptions of a “good job.”

The mikeroweWORKS Foundation is a public non-profit that promotes alternative education, skilled trades, entrepreneurship, innovation and US manufacturing in a variety of ways. It awards tool scholarships, travel stipends, educational scholarships and other financial assistance to those pursuing a skilled trade. mikeroweWORKS Foundation scholarships are now synonymous with “Work Ethic Scholarships,” and Mike has partnered with numerous companies and like-minded organizations to reinvigorate the skilled trades and issue a direct challenge to the marketing campaigns that currently promote four-year degrees at the expense of more affordable and more practical trade schools.

In addition, I hope to discuss with the Committee that we implement a national PR campaign designed to challenge such stigmas and stereotypes.