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of Colorado

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NEWS RELEASE

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ENGINEERS - Crucial to Sustaining Our Quality of Life ***Remembering Our Focus: Engineering Week 2006***

Society tends to take engineers for granted – but without engineers, our world would be an abysmal place. In fact, all one has to do is look at some of the third world countries to get a pretty good idea of what a lack of engineers means to a society. Engineers help build and maintain the infrastructure that is necessary for a civilization's development, prosperity, and sustainability.

This week as we celebrate Engineers Week 2006, ACEC/CO Member Dave Frazier, a P.E. with Merrick, offers a striking perspective on the role of the “behind the scenes” engineer.

Engineers are responsible for providing the following infrastructure underpinnings that are essential to society:

- Water- Safe and adequate water supplies and distribution
- Waste Removal- Sanitary human waste removal and treatment
- Transportation- Multi-transportation systems for moving goods and people
- Energy-Energy production and distribution systems to heat our dwellings
- Flood Protection Systems-Reservoirs/Channels that protect people from floods

A prospering society needs multitudes of engineers to insure these critical systems are properly planned, designed, constructed, maintained, and periodically replaced and upgraded. It is important that we recruit, educate, and graduate sufficient quantities of engineers each year to accomplish this mission.

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Our nation's future infrastructure and prosperity may be at risk, due to a lack of adequate numbers of engineers in the future, due to two factors.

- Enrollments at U.S. Engineering schools and colleges steadily decreased during the 1990s. We are just now starting to see a recovery in the number of engineering enrollments. (According to a Bureau of Labor Statistics report, "The number of engineering undergraduate degrees awarded annually rose above the 1990 level for the first time in 2002, showing a 4 percent increase to 68,648.")
- A very large number of practicing engineers will be retiring over the next decade. This, in and of itself, will leave the U.S. with a shortfall in engineering resources for our future infrastructure needs.

Some of our future engineering requirements may be met by outsourcing. But, many types of engineering projects are not. For instance, the redevelopment and reconstruction of most of our infrastructure is very much an "on site-on the ground" process, requiring local data gathering (surveys and mapping), and local designs and engineering solutions to address discoveries in the field. These are not suitable for outsourcing.

In summary, a serious commitment to recruiting young people into the practice of engineering is paramount to ensure that the United States has adequate numbers of engineers for our future infrastructure needs. This is crucial, and absolutely necessary in order to sustain our nation's continuing prosperity.

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