

Why This Christian Hollywood Star Was Testifying to Congress

Actor John Ratzenberger is best known for his TV role as the insufferable know-it-all Cliff Claven on “Cheers”—or for his voice talents in every Pixar film ever made, from *Toy Story* to *The Good Dinosaur*—but an entirely different aspect of his life brought him to Capitol Hill this week.

The talented actor—who appeared in the Christian film *The Woodcarver* in 2012—also happens to be a very successful entrepreneur and small business owner. As co-founder of Nuts, Bolts and Thingamajigs Foundation, he has dedicated himself to raising awareness among young people of skilled trades and engineering disciplines.

Through that part of his life, Ratzenberger became a chief spokesman for the Center for America, a 501(c)(3) non-profit that has allowed him to further develop his work and increase awareness about the skilled worker shortage facing the U.S., as well as the changes needed to positively impact and increase the number of skilled workers in the country.

The Emmy-nominated actor told members of the House Small Business Committee Thursday that the face of American manufacturing has changed dramatically in recent years, presenting new job opportunities for millions of Americans. He testified alongside a panel of small manufacturers and experts about the importance of vocational training to close the manufacturing skills gap.

“There are close to a million jobs available right now in small businesses around the country that rely on people with mechanical common sense skills that we’ve stopped offering in our public schools three generations ago,” he said. “The most

repeated complaint today from potential employers is that it's impossible to train someone for any of the jobs available when they graduate from high schools everywhere without the ability to even read inches and fractions from a simple ruler.

"Manufacturing is the backbone of Western Civilization. Everything we do every single day is reliant first on someone's ability to not only put a nut and a bolt together but to make that nut and that bolt in the first place.

"The big worrisome question then is this: How do we reinstate the necessary programs in our schools to give our children a familiarity of the tools that built and maintain our civilization and way of life? If the average age of the people that keep our nation and the nation's infrastructure working is 58 years old, then how long do we have before it all stops?"

Civilization, he said, rests entirely on our ability to make things. He asked the committee to consider what would happen if "all the skilled trades people from carpenters and plumbers to farmers and truck drivers decided not to show up for work tomorrow": the entire nation would instantly grind to a halt, "causing problems that would take generations to overcome."

"I also submit that we do away with the term 'blue collar worker' and replace it with 'essential worker,' because that's exactly what they are," he added. "Once they are all retired then no more ships, buildings, trains, planes, or automobiles. No more tractors, no more farms, no more food unless we grow it ourselves in fields we plow with tools we've made with our own hands.

"That's the way it's always been and if we someday want to explore the universe, cure disease and marvel at what awaits us in the oceans depths, then we'd better get busy introducing our youngsters to the vital art of using tools and the joy of self reliance."

You can read Ratzenberger's entire testimony by clicking [here](#).
See the video of the hearing below.