

# Letters

## Vapor Retarders in North Carolina

In the May Q&A, a reader from North Carolina questions whether a polyethylene vapor retarder is required on the interior side of an insulated wall. The North Carolina 2006 Residential Building Code, Section R318.1, requires moisture vapor retarders in only five of the state's 100 counties: Alleghany, Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, and Yancey. These five counties are in climate zone 2 — mountain elevations that are prone to colder temperatures.

**Dan Tingen**

Chairman, N.C. Building Code Council  
Raleigh, N.C.

## Cost of Custom Work

I appreciated Gary Katz's article on the curved coffered ceiling (3/08) and would like a little more background about the job. How large was the ceiling? How many man-hours did the project require, and what was the material cost? What would be the cost to the client of a project like that? Also, was that beautiful resulting finish stained or painted to look like wood?

**Dave Coyne**

Home & Hearth Remodeling and Restoration  
West Springfield, Mass.

*Author Gary Katz responds: While it's not fair to compare actual labor prices from one part of the country to another, man-hours and a material estimate should give a good clue as to what the project would cost in your region.*

*The room was about 14 by 20 feet, which means a flat ceiling would have been about 280 square feet, while the barrel area was a little over 300 square feet. I've never actually found a square-footage formula that works for coffered ceilings, even flat ones. Every one is different — the number and size of the beams, the size of the crown, the*

*wood species and finish, and so on — so I bid every one by the room, using cost data from previous jobs as a starting point. In this case, three carpenters spent one-and-a-half weeks installing the trim. The material cost was approximately \$6,000. All of the curved crown was flexible trim. The painter who follows behind us is an artist at "staining" resin-based trim to match wood. We don't ever include painting in our prices, so I can't tell you the cost — though I know he's not cheap!*

## Is Hiring Illegals Like Stealing?

Steve Ryan's "solution" to the problem of undocumented workers (*Letters*, 5/08) is ludicrous. According to Mr. Ryan, so-called honest businesspersons should be allowed to continue with illegal business practices as long as they tell the proper governing authority about it. That would be like allowing a thief to keep stealing as long as he tells the police, who would let him to keep stealing until they found a solution to the problem of theft.

Mr. Ryan also implies that Arizona and Tennessee are putting American companies out of business. After witnessing the struggles of honest businesses competing in a deceitful and profit-mad construction marketplace, I believe Arizona and Tennessee are putting the right "American" companies out of business.

**Paul Dugas**

Burgettstown, Pa.

## Presidential Nod

Steve Ryan should run for president; his letter (5/08) is dead on. Why our government has not implemented something along these lines I have no idea.

He is also correct in his characterization of the struggles of small businesses. Here in Massachusetts we hire immigrant workers, and without them all of us would be having a hard time. These people want to work, but they also want to return home some day. Steve's idea — bringing them aboveboard with a special Social Security number — is perfect. Good job, Steve. You get my vote.

**John Hobby**

Franklin, Mass.

### KEEP 'EM COMING!

Letters must be signed and include the writer's address.

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