

CONSTRUCTION

What AGC's new leader sees on the horizon

VJS Construction Services executive is the national president of the trade group

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Rick Andritsch has spent nearly three decades helping grow Pewaukee-based contractor VJS Construction Services. Now he's preparing to take on one of the construction industry's most visible leadership roles.

Andritsch, a partner and vice president of business development at VJS, was installed March 26 as national president of the Associated General Contractors of America during the group's annual convention in Orlando. The trade group rep-



VJS CONSTRUCTION SERVICES
Rick Andritsch, vice president of business development at VJS Construction Services

resents more than 27,000 construction firms nationwide.

His installation marks a milestone for the state: Andritsch will be the first AGC of America president from a Wisconsin-based firm.

Andritsch sat down with the Business Journal for a discussion about his priorities

for the year ahead and his take on some of the biggest issues facing contractors today. The conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

How are tariffs affecting material prices right now? Tariffs might be Donald Trump's favorite word, but a contractor's favorite word is "stability." We just want it done so we can then go on with life. The constant changing of things, the flux, is the problem with tariffs at this point.

I don't have any answers for you on where things are going to end up, but I just know that we have lobbyists working on the Hill every day to make sure that we have clarity – as much clarity as we can – coming out of what's going on. If you ask me a question today, the answer may be different tomorrow. That's how quickly things are changing in that political environment.

What is the data center construction boom doing to everything else? If you've driven past the data center project in Port Washington, it is a city they're building; you're going 75 miles an hour on the highway and you're still next to that job two minutes later.

The data center companies themselves,

then the contractors working for them, and then the subcontractors working on those jobs, are causing problems for VJS and other companies like VJS. They're hiring local people, they're overpaying, and they're taking people from us.

What does that do to the Milwaukee community and the rest of the country? It causes stress on the rest of our people. We still need to hire more people, and it makes that perpetual process of hiring people all the time ongoing and harder.

How much is that affecting housing? An electrician on a single-family home can do just as fine being an electrician on a data center with three or four months of training. I'm not saying that's the same for every trade, but the mechanical trades can adjust pretty quickly. There's a lot of concrete being poured. Who's going to pour it? I also want to protect our finishers and lathers so we can take care of our own clients.

I'm having a lot of conversations with Milwaukee Area Technical College, Ozaukee County, Racine County and Kenosha County: "Look, we need to increase the pipeline. We need more people in the industry. We need to go to the students in middle school and high school."