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## **Rising Costs Feared to Crimp Puerto Rico's Building Boom.**

### **Contractors worry minimum-wage law and Trump administration tariffs could slow rebuilding efforts**

Miguel Córdoba had trouble finding steady work as a carpenter and handyman before Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico last year. Now the 52-year-old says he pulls steady 40-hour workweeks for a taxpayer-financed housing program that repairs damaged residences.

His wages have nearly doubled, too, thanks to a new minimum-wage law enacted last summer by Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló, coupled with a surge in demand for construction labor across this struggling U.S. territory. Mr. Córdoba spent his summer days fixing roofs and windows and installing toilets, wash basins and cabinets in houses mostly in eastern Puerto Rico, where Hurricane Maria first made landfall.

The construction workforce, estimated at roughly 33,000 before Hurricane Maria, will need to double to keep up with demand to rebuild roads, houses and other infrastructure damaged in last year's storm season, said Emilio Colon-Zavala, president of the Puerto Rico Builders Association. Cement sales, a proxy for construction activity, increased for eight months straight after Hurricane Maria to 33% above prestorm levels.

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### **The Wall Street Journal**

By Andrew Scurria and Julie Wernau

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