



# Building America Back Better Biden's Agenda is Working for the IBEW

*How President Biden's actions benefit working families and IBEW members*

## CELEBRATING THE IBEW IN HISTORIC CONVENTION PRESIDENTIAL SPEECH

President Joe Biden electrified the IBEW Convention in Chicago on May 11, drawing thunderous cheers for infrastructure projects that will employ IBEW members far into the future, championing unions like none of his predecessors, fighting to cut taxes for working families and make billionaires pay their fair share, among other historic progress and plans for a better, more just America.

"The only reason I'm standing here now as president of the United States is because the IBEW came on with me early," [Biden said as he arrived on stage at the 40th International Convention](#) to a raucous standing ovation — somehow possible even with every other hand appearing to hold a camera phone in the air.



Joe Biden became the first sitting president to address an IBEW convention on May 11. "The only reason I'm standing here now as president of the United States is because the IBEW came on with me early," he said.

Biden is the only sitting president [to address an IBEW convention](#), building on an already significant record of visits to IBEW halls and workplaces and shoutouts to the union and its members everywhere, from road speeches to the State of the Union.

Introducing him, International President Lonnie R. Stephenson detailed the IBEW's exhaustive efforts to put Biden in the White House — and why.

"Joe Biden always makes sure that the IBEW's agenda is his agenda," he said. "He has our back, and we have his."

Biden harkened back to a campaign promise that his audience knew by heart. "I said early on that I was going to be the most pro-labor union president we've ever had, for a simple reason: you allow workers to maintain their dignity, you allow them to hold their heads up high."

For more on President Biden's historic visit to the IBEW Convention, [click here](#).

## INVESTING IN MANUFACTURING JOBS; HIGHLIGHTING IBEW MEMBERS AT WHITE HOUSE ROLLOUT

Members of the IBEW were front and center for President Joe Biden's White House announcement of Siemens USA's plan to invest \$54 million to expand its manufacturing facilities, a growth that promises to bring at least 300 new jobs to the company's IBEW-represented workplaces in California and Texas.

The White House event highlighted on the national stage President Biden's close relationship with the IBEW.

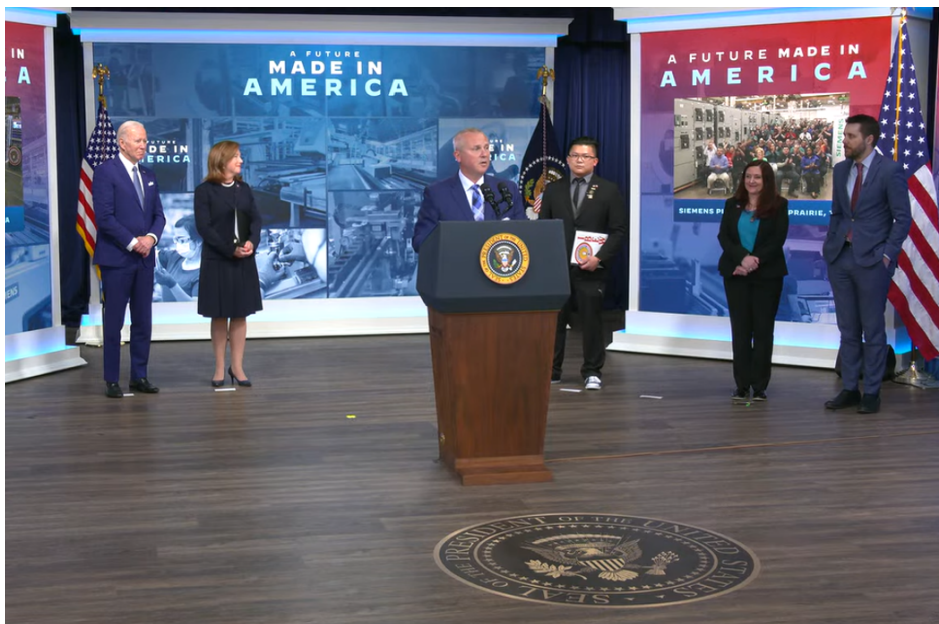
"President Biden a year ago was talking about bringing jobs back to the United States," IBEW President Lonnie R. Stephenson said at the White House. "Good-paying manufacturing jobs, and more importantly, he says, union jobs. That's why we are here."

Siemens makes components that support a variety of technologies, including electric vehicle chargers, computer circuit boards and the file servers that fill data centers. The company's planned expansion will send about \$40 million to Pomona, Calif., to build a new hub where Los Angeles Local 1710's members will manufacture electric vehicle charging stations.

Arlington, Texas Local 220 shop steward Johnny Le introduced Biden, who credited White House staffers for helping him find the right words to say during his remarks.

"When my parents fled communist Vietnam with nothing but the clothes on their backs and hope of a better life, they never envisioned one day their son would be introducing the president of the United States," said Le, a nine-year IBEW member who also serves as an interpreter for some of his Vietnamese-speaking co-workers. "My story and so many others of first-generation Americans would not be possible without the important pro-worker, pro-union policies that President Biden and his administration support."

President Stephenson said the IBEW is proud to partner with Siemens to advance manufacturing careers in this industry. "These are union careers that won't just rebuild our infrastructure, but our middle class as well. I'm excited by Siemens's announcement that it is investing in American manufacturing to make electrical equipment that will help strengthen our energy infrastructure while also putting us on the road to a clean energy future."



*IBEW President Lonnie Stephenson and members of Arlington, Texas Local 220 were front and center at a March 4 event at the White House highlighting domestic manufacturing.*

Also on March 4, President Biden announced the most robust updates to the implementation of the [Buy American Act](#) in nearly 70 years to ensure taxpayer dollars create good-paying jobs here at home, strengthen critical supply chains, and position U.S. businesses to compete in strategic industries. Since President Biden took office, the economy added 375,000 manufacturing jobs, the most in 30 years.

[Click here](#) for a more in-depth article on the March 4 Siemens announcement.

## SETTING A TOP-DOWN, PRO-WORKER, PRO-UNION TONE IN MINNESOTA

The opportunity to bask in the glow of appreciation for working people does not come often, particularly in the presence of high-ranking elected officials, including the President of the United States.

But that's where Duluth, Minn., Local 242 President Kyle Bukovich found himself on March 2 at the University of Wisconsin-Superior with [President Joe Biden](#), first lady Jill Biden, Sens. Amy Klobuchar, Tina Smith (both from Minnesota), and Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin.

"It was great to be in the same room to be with so many legislators and elected officials who fully support unions and the working class," said Bukovich, who was joined by Duluth Local 31 Business Representative Kristin Renskers. "It doesn't happen a lot in this day and age."

The day after the State of the Union Speech, President Biden's trip to the Duluth area highlighted the assistance the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will bring to the port city on the shores of Lake Superior, where the massive 61-year-old Blatnik bridge hangs in deteriorating condition. One of the two main bridges that connects Duluth and Superior, Wis., the Blatnik is 1.5 miles long and rises 120 feet from the edge of Lake Superior over the cities' twin ports.

Bukovich, who is also president of Northern Wisconsin Building Trades, said he expects Local 242 to win work replacing underground utility lines, upgrading street lighting and traffic light system, and building out the electric vehicle infrastructure. This spring, the first cohort of Local 242 apprentices will graduate with the newly required Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Training Program (EVITP) credential.

## MEETING WITH LABOR LEADERS TO DISCUSS STRENGTHENING LABOR UNIONS

President Biden met with IBEW President Lonnie Stephenson and labor leaders to discuss strengthening America's labor unions and support workers.

"Together, we're building the economy from the bottom up and middle out," Biden tweeted after the March 8 meeting, the latest in several gatherings Biden has held with labor leaders. The meeting in Delaware was organized by President Stephenson and AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler, who is also a member of the IBEW.



*President Biden met once again with the leaders of America's top labor unions in March. IBEW President Lonnie Stephenson is pictured third from left in the back row.*

## EMPHASIZING IBEW TRAINING, WORKERS IN EV NETWORK ROLLOUT

Federal guidance for the creation of a national network of electric-powered vehicle charging stations explicitly recommends that agencies consider the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Training Program as they look to spend billions in funds allocated by President Biden's infrastructure bill, which passed last November.

The move is an important first step in following through on Biden's pledge that [America's expanding EV charging network](#) will be built by IBEW members.

"We're pleased that this guidance sets the foundation for the development of national EV charging standards but, more importantly, that it recognizes the need for quality training by specifically mentioning EVITP, which will help ensure the creation of good, union jobs," said IBEW President Lonnie R. Stephenson.

The National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure guidance strongly encourages jurisdictions to consider workers' experience and training when applying for a share of the program's funding. "This includes ensuring the workforce is trained in high-quality training programs like the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Training Program (EVITP)," the guidance reads.

At the Feb. 10 press conference outside Department of Transportation headquarters in Washington, D.C., several Biden administration officials announced that nearly \$5 billion will be made available to all 50 states, plus Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia, over the next five years to help create the network along designated "alternative fuel corridors." Unions, specifically the IBEW, were mentioned several times during the conference.





"Once we get shovels in the ground to put these chargers up, it is going to mean jobs, jobs, jobs and more jobs," said Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm. "The jobs that are good-paying union jobs all over the country, in every pocket of this country, and the training that goes with [them] is a huge opportunity for communities."



EVITP-credentialed members will help build out the nation's electric vehicle charging network. IBEW training includes EVITP, which is also a short course available to journey-level members.

"These new EV chargers will use American parts, iron and steel," said Mitch Landrieu, senior advisor to Biden for infrastructure coordination. "They'll be installed up and down highway corridors across the country by IBEW workers, and the benefits will ripple out thousands of miles away."

However, the mention of EVITP in the guidance didn't just happen in a vacuum, said Government Affairs Department Director Danielle Eckert.

"There are other proprietary training programs out there that are against EVITP at all levels," she said. Singling out EVITP, though, should help boost jurisdictions' interest in the program, she said.

said, acknowledging the work of the IBEW members who are helping to ensure officials understand EVITP's quality.

[Click here](#) to read an in-depth *Electrical Worker* article on the IBEW's EV training.

## MODERNIZING DAVIS-BACON: BIDEN ADMINISTRATION PLAN WOULD RAISE WAGES ON FEDERAL PROJECTS

A labor department plan to [strengthen federal prevailing wage rules](#) and enforcement under the Davis-Bacon Act would put more money in the pockets of an estimated 1.2 million U.S. construction workers.

Labor Secretary Marty Walsh said the changes would "help us make sure our skilled workers and wages can't be undercut" and are especially timely as projects funded by President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law surge nationwide.

"Federal dollars should be used to create good jobs in local communities all across our country," Walsh said. "These proposed regulations are good for workers, good for building high-quality infrastructure and for ensuring we have a strong construction industry as we rebuild America."

The 1931 law, signed by President Herbert Hoover, was weakened by a Reagan-era overhaul 40 years ago. Most notably, it reduced the rate paid to workers on federally funded construction projects by changing how local prevailing wages are calculated.

The DOL wants to restore the original formula and review it more frequently so that rates set for federal contractors continue to align with local construction wages.

The update includes anti-retaliation language to protect workers who raise concerns about payment practices from being fired or discriminated against. There are also new strategies for recovering back pay.

The long-sought revisions are welcome news to the IBEW and its building trades partners.

"The proposed updates will restore the Act's intended bipartisan purpose to protect the hard-earned wages of construction workers, and in doing so, shield them from exploitation," IBEW President Lonnie R. Stephenson said.

The DOL, which has been setting a record pace for pro-worker initiatives during the Biden administration, made its proposal public on March 11.



"Our members are the nation's best-trained, most highly skilled construction workers and for 40 years, the law has let federal contractors get away with paying them less than they deserve, along with their building trades brothers and sisters," said Austin Keyser, assistant to the international president for government affairs.

[Click here](#) for more on this important update to Davis-Bacon.

## CHARTING A COURSE FOR 'MILESTONE' FEDERAL POLICY TO EMPOWER WORKERS

The first-of-its-kind task force that President Joe Biden created last year to identify ways that his administration can help empower workers and strengthen unions has returned with nearly 70 recommendations for federal agencies to pursue.

Their [43-page report](#) is a roadmap for bolstering workers' rights and bettering their lives through policies that support union organizing and collective bargaining, goals [Biden has championed](#) from the White House bully pulpit like no president before him.

"This is a significant milestone," International President Lonnie R. Stephenson said. "By recognizing and uplifting the critical role that labor unions play in improving the lives of working people, the Biden-Harris administration is once again leading by example and delivering victories for working people."

As emphasized by labor leaders and the task force itself, the catch is that executive branch policy can only do so much for workers for so long. Lasting protections demand legislation.

"To truly secure the rights of workers to freely and fairly form and join unions, Congress must pass the Protecting the Right to Organize Act," Stephenson said.

Officially the White House Task Force on Worker Organizing and Empowerment, the panel is chaired by Vice President Kamala Harris and Labor Secretary Marty Walsh and comprises 24 cabinet secretaries, agency heads and top advisors.

[Click here](#) to read an in-depth *Electrical Worker* article on the work of the task force.



*The Biden administration's high-level task force is actively instituting policies to support unionizing and collective bargaining.*

## CHAMPIONING PLAS ON LARGE FEDERAL PROJECTS

President Joe Biden has signed an executive order that will require [project labor agreements on federal construction](#) projects over \$35 million.

"The executive order ... is going to help ensure that we build a better America, we build it right, we build it on time and we build it cheaper than it would have been otherwise," Biden said before signing the order on Feb. 4.

A PLA is a multiemployer contract that covers an entire construction project or projects and creates a uniform and stable labor relations system by setting terms like wages, employment conditions and dispute resolution. PLAs are used in both the public and private sectors to help ensure that large-scale projects are completed on time, with the highest degree of quality and in a cost-effective manner.



"These agreements ... they ensure that major projects are handled by well-trained, well-prepared, highly-skilled workers, and they ward off problems. They resolve disputes ahead of time, ensuring safer worksites, and avoiding disruptions in work stoppages that can cause expensive delays down the line. And that makes a big difference for the American taxpayer," Biden said.

The White House said the order would apply to \$262 billion in federal construction contracting and impact nearly 200,000 workers. It comes on the heels of the passage of the \$1 trillion infrastructure bill. While much of that funding will go to non-federal projects, billions are still expected to go to federal spending on waterways, military bases and other areas.

[Click here](#) to read an in-depth *Electrical Worker* article on the PLA order.

## VISITING HUGE IBEW WORKSITE IN OREGON

President Biden traveled to Portland, Ore., on April 21 to visit the site of a massive project to upgrade the Portland International Airport and discuss the infrastructure law's role in transforming the economy of the Pacific Northwest.

"Through the bipartisan infrastructure bill, we're investing \$25 billion this year to modernize American airports all across this country and across this state, not just here," [Biden said](#). "Best of all, this project will support more than 1,250 good-paying jobs constructing the terminal. Over 95 percent of the construction is being done by union workers. Union."

President Biden was introduced by Portland Local 48 member Lauren Heitzman, a fourth-year inside wireman apprentice working on Portland International Airport. She said she was grateful for the chance to hone her craft alongside the best workers in the world.

"I see this airport as the firm foundation for families to grow and flourish," she said. "To me, not only is this project a symbol of modern advancement and ingenuity, it is the vehicle for the promise of a better life."

Less than a month later, on his visit to Chicago for the IBEW Convention, [President Biden](#) referenced Heitzman's background as the child of a single mom, struggling to find a solid career – until she joined the IBEW.

"She's putting in her years and the thousands of hours that she needs to put in to become a journeyman electrician," Biden said in his May 11 remarks to the IBEW delegation. "Lauren told me that the airport will symbolize the crown jewel of the Pacific Northwest but it will also symbolize something else: a better life — a better life for an IBEW member. That means fairness and dignity in the workplace."

"And it'll be a symbol for a better America because the IBEW is just getting started," Biden said.

## RAMPING UP DOMESTIC RENEWABLE MANUFACTURING

The Biden administration invoked the Defense Production Act to ease supply chain issues around solar panels on June 6, while continuing its investigation into possible Chinese trade violations.

Taken together, IBEW President Lonnie Stephenson said the suite of executive actions will build America's energy arsenal and spur domestic energy manufacturing while reducing energy costs, supporting good-paying union jobs, and strengthening U.S. energy independence while maintaining strong labor standards.

"The outsourcing of critical American goods like solar panels has weakened supply chains and increased reliance on overseas production with limited labor and environmental standards," Stephenson said. "We have long opposed solar panel dumping in the United States and will continue to do so."

As a union that represents workers in the manufacturing sector, the IBEW has opposed any attempts by the industry to circumvent policies put in place to protect U.S. workers, the economy, and competitiveness.

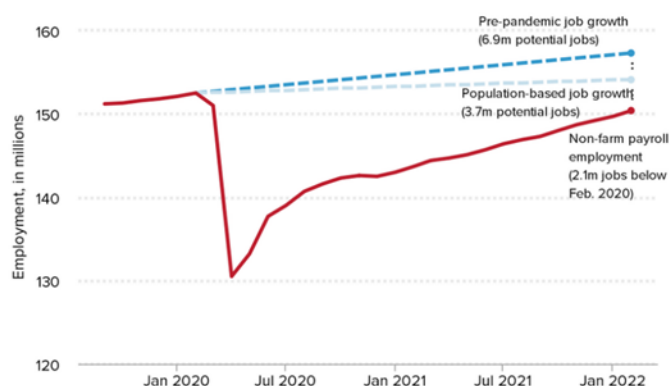
International competition has wiped out hundreds of thousands of IBEW jobs engineering, building and assembling electrical equipment, components, and consumer and industrial products.

“The decimation of the domestic manufacturing industry will take years to repair, but these actions are a step in the right direction,” Stephenson said.

## ADDING NEW JOBS TO FUEL STRONGER EMPLOYMENT MARKET

### Measuring the job shortfall since February 2020

Actual and counterfactual employment, January 2019–February 2022



**Notes:** Payroll employment growth averaged 202,000 in the 12 months leading up to the pandemic recession. Population-adjusted employment growth applies population growth in the latest month since February 2020 to payroll employment and interpolates in the intervening years.

**Source:** EPI analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey public data series.

Economic Policy Institute

Nearly [8 million new jobs](#) have been added to the U.S. economy since the end of 2020. This means that employment is nearly matching [pre-pandemic levels](#) from two years ago. Construction is among the leading sectors for job growth, and that is only likely to improve as funding for infrastructure projects resulting from the historic new law comes to fruition.

Economists predict the job market will return to pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2022.

“It’s mindbogglingly fast and sustained growth – well over half a million jobs added per month on average for more than a year,” said Heidi Shierholz, Economic Policy Institute president.

## TALKING TRADE AGREEMENTS WITH LABOR, IBEW MEMBERS

U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai met with business and [labor leaders at the Port of Baltimore](#) on March 21 to discuss Atlantic trade with her counterpart from the United Kingdom.

Discussions over terms of a bilateral trade agreement between the two countries under consideration previously changed when the Biden administration took over, said Baltimore Local 24 President Sam Curreri.

Curreri said he was glad to participate in talks representing labor in a global trade setting and cautioned that even industrialized countries like the United States and the United Kingdom need to be mindful of agreements allowing supply chains that include factories with exploited workers in underdeveloped countries.

“There are no better folks to sit at the table than folks who negotiate a contract every couple of years,” Curreri said. “I hope I have the opportunity to go back.”



Baltimore Local 24 President Sam Curreri, third from left, was among the labor delegation to meet with U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai and her counterpart from the United Kingdom.





## SENDING VP HARRIS, CABINET SECRETARIES TO MEET WITH IBEW MEMBERS, VISIT TRAINING CENTERS

Biden administration officials routinely stop at training centers and worksites and include IBEW members at roundtables.



*Portland Local 48 apprentice Amber Sommer shows visitors how to use a conduit bender. They include from left, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown, Rep. Earl Blumenauer, U.S. Labor Secretary Marty Walsh and Rep. Suzanne Bonamici.*

**Vice President Kamala Harris** traveled to Durham, N.C. to call for more unionization in the state.

"To continue our recovery, we must then create more good-paying jobs, good union jobs. In big cities and small towns across our country, union workers are building the future," [Harris said](#) in her Durham speech, where she was joined by Labor Secretary Marty Walsh.

Alvin Warwick Jr., Winston-Salem Local 342 business manager, had the opportunity to meet with them on their visit.

**Department of Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm** joined IBEW members for a roundtable in Lexington, Ken. where she met with Louisville Local 369 member Ed Devine at Schneider Electric.

**Labor Secretary Marty Walsh** toured an IBEW-NECA training center in Portland, Ore., on March 24, along with Gov. Kate Brown and Rep. Earl Blumenauer.

On a trip to Colorado in February, Walsh included members from Denver Locals 68 and 111 in conversations about registered apprenticeships.

"Registered apprenticeship is a proven model to connect workers to good jobs—a key priority for the Biden-Harris administration," said Secretary Walsh, who was joined by Gov. Jared Polis and Sens. Michael Bennet and John Hickenlooper.

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