

## NEWS RELEASE



### International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers® AFL-CIO-CLC

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#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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#### **RALLY TO TELL PHILIPS: KEEP THE LIGHTS ON IN SPARTA**

***Workers, Community Challenge Company Plans to Shutter Award-Winning Plant***

**SPARTA, TENN. – On Saturday, Jan. 8**, community activists, business leaders, elected officials and plant workers will rally in front of the Philips lighting plant in Sparta, Tenn., to challenge the company's plan to shut down the facility and move its operations to Mexico.

Rally participants are calling on Netherlands-based Philips to not turn its back on the people of Sparta and the approximately 275 employees of the plant, which has been widely recognized for excellence, including being named one of North America's 10 best plants in 2009 by Industry Week magazine. The plant is the area's largest employer.

The former Thomas lighting plant has manufactured lighting fixtures for more than 40 years, before being purchased from Genlyte in 2007 by Royal Philips.

"The plant is a model workplace," says IBEW International Representative Brent Hall, who represents workers at the facility. "Labor-management relations are excellent. IBEW Local 2143 has always been willing to negotiate with the company to make the plant run more efficiently. There has not been a work stoppage in more than 30 years."

As recently as two months ago, Philips awarded the plant its "lean" manufacturing award, recognizing the efforts of workers and management to increase productivity and cut costs. The average wage for production workers at the plant is \$13 an hour.

The company, which prides itself on its commitment to green technology, says it will begin production in January of energy-efficient LED light fixtures, which are increasingly in demand as incandescent bulbs are phased out.

"The IBEW has always considered every option put forward by management to help reduce costs and increase competitiveness," says Hall. "But Philips did not even give the employees the opportunity to negotiate before announcing the plant's shutdown. Plant workers and White County residents deserve better."

With unemployment in White County running more than 14 percent, the plant's closure will have a devastating effect on the local economy.

The rally will feature remarks from local labor, community and political leaders. The list of invited speakers includes Sparta-White County Chamber of Commerce President Wallace Austin, White County Executive Herd Sullivan, Mayor Jeff Young, state Rep. Charles Curtiss, state Sen. Charlotte Burks, and IBEW International President Edwin D. Hill.

**WHAT:** Rally to Tell Philips: Keep the Lights On In Sparta

**WHEN:** 1 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 8

**WHERE:** Philips Lighting Plant, 3300 McMinnville Hwy., Sparta, Tenn.

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*The [International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers](#) (IBEW) represents approximately 725,000 members who work in a wide variety of fields, including manufacturing, utilities, construction, telecommunications, broadcasting, railroads and government.*