

# THE ELECTRICAL WORKER

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1893

CONSTRUCTION • UTILITIES • TELECOMMUNICATIONS • MANUFACTURING • GOVERNMENT • BROADCASTING • RAILROAD

Printed in the USA

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

Vol. 15 | No. 3 | March 2021

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## NEW FEATURE

### GROUND<sup>ED</sup> IN HISTORY

We're celebrating 130 years of IBEW history with a new monthly feature.

See page 6



Credit: IBEW Local 1245/John Storey

Across every branch of the IBEW, members masked up and got to work despite the challenges of the last year, just like this PG&E crew from Vacaville, Calif., Local 1245. Left to right: Lineman Derek Duncan, Lineman Alec Rubio, ELA Malik Floyd-Stinson, Apprentice Brian Haas and Electric Crew Foreman Ron Chapman.

For most of us, the pandemic of 2020 has transformed our lives. Commutes, gone. Offices, gone. Drop-offs at school, gone. Sadly, too often loved ones gone as well.

But one of the most remarkable aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic for the members of the IBEW was how often and how often we were called on to maintain stability and provide the foundation that kept life and the rest of the economy from collapsing.

For the last 12 months, our members have made it possible for millions of people to work and study from home. The data centers that made billions of video calls possible were built with our hands. The hospitals, permanent and temporary, were built with our hands. Overnight, the 100-year-old model of where

and when power is consumed changed completely — offices never lit up, houses never went dark — and we handled it without skipping a beat.

Someone out there coined the term, “The International Brotherhood of Essential Workers,” and it stuck.

It has been a full year since much of North America saw offices and schools shutter. For most of the members of the IBEW, work didn’t stop. Our jobs changed. Policies changed. The people we work with changed along with the shape of daily life. But it was still our work, and we did it with pride and a renewed commitment to safety.

And we did the unhappy, necessary work at the darker edges of the pandemic. We built the field hospitals in parking lots and fairgrounds and convention centers. We wired the temporary morgues because it had to be done and we were the ones able to do it.

When work needed to be done, we stepped up. We slept in trailers on parking lots outside grid operation centers.

When we traveled hundreds of miles for mutual assistance work after hurricanes or major storms, we slept in our trucks. We ate alone.

We did it because our families depended on us. Our neighbors depended on us. We did it because it was our job.

“For the past year, I’ve heard stories every day that make me so proud not only to lead this great union, but just to be a member of it,” said International President Lonnie R. Stephenson. “When our communities and our countries called on us, we’ve been there to answer it. We’ve taken care of one another and our families through one of the most difficult years imaginable.

“But now is not the time to let off,” he said. With new, more transmissible variants being seen, the race is on to complete a mass vaccination campaign that is just barely underway.

“Take care of yourself, your family and your brothers and sisters on the job. Follow protocols. Wear a mask. Stay socially distant. Wash your hands regularly,” Stephenson said.

A year is still soon to declare victory. It is only a time to take stock.

“We kept our communities warm, powered up and connected. We helped get our countries to where an end is in sight,” he said. “Now, let’s finish the job.”

The stories on Pages 4-6 of this issue are just a few examples of IBEW brothers and sisters working through, adapting and staying safe in a calamitous year.

**A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER** continued on page 4



## FROM THE OFFICERS

## One of Our Own



**Lonnie R. Stephenson**  
International President

**S**isters and brothers, as I write this column on Feb. 4, I'm watching Brother Marty Walsh sit for his U.S. Senate confirmation hearing to become United States Secretary of Labor. I'll tell you, this is a banner day for the labor movement, and one that so many of you worked hard to make happen.

You see, Marty is from labor. He's a member and former officer of the Laborers Local 223 in Boston and former head of the Boston Building Trades. When he's confirmed, he'll be the first labor secretary who is a union member in nearly 45 years.

I don't need to tell you what that means. Now, we've had some friends in the secretary's office in that time; some of them were very good to union members and working people. But they weren't one of us. Marty is, and he'll never forget what it means to be a part of a union or what that collective bargaining agreement can mean in the lives of working families.

Appointing a union member as labor secretary is a significant first step in Joe Biden's promise to be the most union-friendly president in history.

On day one of his administration — before he even left the inauguration platform — Biden took another giant leap toward fulfilling that promise, firing the union-busting general counsel of the National Labor Relations Board.

Peter Robb was a thorn in our side from the day Trump appointed him in 2017. During his tenure at the NLRB, he presided over a targeted campaign to eliminate workers' rights on the job, stifle union organizing and make it easier for companies to retaliate against working people seeking a better life for themselves and their families.

We knew it was coming when he got the job. Peter Robb made a career of sticking it to working families and their unions. He was instrumental in Ronald Reagan's destruction of the Air Traffic Controllers during their strike in 1981, and he made millions representing companies looking to do the same thing ever since.

In this issue, you'll read about a few more of President Biden's early appointees, including one of our own, Jennifer Kropke of Los Angeles Local 11, who will serve as Director of Energy Jobs at the Department of Energy, working to make sure that the transition to a clean energy future creates opportunities for working people and not just corporations.

As I've said many times before, Joe Biden's energy plan is a 21st century jobs plan, and we will hold him to that commitment. It won't always be an easy switch to make, but IBEW members will be the beneficiaries of a massive investment in energy infrastructure that will transform the way we generate, transmit and consume power.

Most importantly, we'll have a seat at the table as those important decisions are made. These first few weeks of the new administration have proven that. ■

## A Year of Adversity

**O**ne year ago this month, the coronavirus became real for most of us. For a couple of months before, we'd heard about its spread in China and Italy, and a few cases had made their way to our shores.

It was scary sounding, but it wasn't a part of our lives yet. That all changed in March.

A year later, we've lost more than 450,000 Americans and 20,000 Canadians to this terrible virus, including many of our sisters and brothers and their loved ones, all members of the extended IBEW family.

That level of pain, suffering and loss was unimaginable to me 12 months ago, as I'm sure it was for many of you.

But even when the virus was at its worst — and in no way is this thing over — the women and men of the IBEW stepped up and answered the calls of our communities, our employers, our customers, our families and our union.

Lonnie and I couldn't be prouder of the way you all have risen to the most significant challenge of our time and done your jobs and done them well.

You've kept power flowing to your communities and built hospitals and research labs and vaccine production lines. You've helped to ensure that personal protective equipment and medical devices made it into the hands of the people who needed it most.

You've maintained phone and network connectivity to allow members of your communities to do their jobs from anywhere and keep in touch with loved ones, and you've made possible the news, sports and entertainment broadcasts that have kept us all informed and sane.

For many of you, contributing to the fight against the pandemic has simply meant showing up every day and keeping the economies of our two great nations afloat, and that's no small thing.

Things look a little different these days with masks and social distancing, temperature checks and more. Maybe it takes a little longer to get to the jobsite or to your workstation. We all know masks can sometimes be irritating. But all of this is for the good of your IBEW sisters and brothers, your families and your communities.

You'll read just a few stories in this issue of how members in different branches of the IBEW have coped with the virus over the last year.

Thanks to the amazing work of scientists and tradesmen and women who've worked to make these vaccines a reality, we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. It won't be this month or next month, but it will be soon.

Until then, keep following protocols, wear a mask and take care of one another. You're making your union proud.

We're going to come out of this stronger than ever. ■



**Kenneth W. Cooper**  
International Secretary-Treasurer

## “LETTERS TO THE EDITOR”

## Remembering a Lost Brother

On Oct. 19, 2020, Local 589 lost our recording secretary and friend, Brother Achilles “Augie” Maccarone. Augie started his IBEW career with Local 308 and worked out of Local 915 before coming to Local 589 in 2007. He quickly became a big part of our local and a big part of our hearts. Augie was a bigger-than-life type of guy. He had two loves, his family and the IBEW. Anyone who had the pleasure of meeting Augie at any of the many IBEW conferences and functions he attended, at work, or even just out for the night, will tell you what a nice, respectful, hardworking, fun type of man he truly was.

Augie was so proud to be a part of the IBEW and he showed it all the time. He took pride in not only being a principal officer for the local, but he also took pride in his work when he was on the tools in the shops. If you were lucky enough to work with or around him, you know just what I am talking about. He gave his best for the better of the union each and every day and his passing is truly a loss. IBEW Local 589 President Jeff Klein said, “Augie exemplified selflessness. He always put the needs of others before his own. He will be missed.”

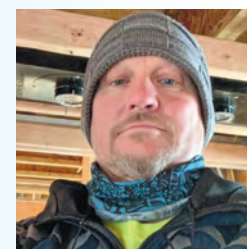
Augie leaves behind his wife, Dawn, and three sons, Anthony, Carmine and Dominick. Dawn and the boys would like to thank everyone from the LIRR, the IBEW, and the friends and family that donated to his GoFundMe to help out during these difficult times.

*Steven Schmitt, Local 589 Financial Secretary  
Jamaica, N.Y.*

**We Want to Hear From You:** Send your letters to [media@ibew.org](mailto:media@ibew.org) or Letters to the Editor, The Electrical Worker, 900 Seventh Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.

## My IBEW STORY

**Michael Boxx, Residential Electrician**  
St. Louis Local 1



“I was working nonunion and wanting something better. I knew it was out there, and when I was approached by Local 1 Business Agent Butch Hepburn, he was just the person I'd been waiting to meet. Butch and I tried to get my company to go union, but despite a couple of close votes, it didn't happen.

Thankfully I was offered an apprenticeship, and I jumped on the opportunity. Since joining the union, I've flourished. The continuing education I'm offered is just amazing. So is the health care. When I married my wife, she had two children from her previous marriage, and I was able to adopt them. I remember seeing the judge sign the adoption papers on a Friday, and when I called on Monday to add *my kids* to our insurance, I was told they'd been covered since the moment the judge signed the papers. I cannot be more thankful to the IBEW for that and for the ability to work toward building a comfortable retirement for my wife and me.

I try to promote the IBEW every chance I get. Now we need to get out there and overturn right-to-work in every state and unionize the whole of this country.”

**Every member in every branch has a story to tell about how the IBEW has improved their life both on and off the job. Tell us yours today for a chance to be featured here.**

**[ibew.org/MyIBEWStory](https://ibew.org/MyIBEWStory)**



# Seats at the Table: Biden Appointees Give Workers, Unions New Clout in Washington

**L**eaders shaped by deep and personal union roots are filling jobs at every level of the Biden-Harris administration, signaling a new era inside the federal government for America's workers.

A second-generation Laborer rising to be U.S. Secretary of Labor. A Steelworker helming the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. An IBEW member bringing her passion for good, union jobs in a green economy to the Department of Energy. And many others.

"This is a turning point that goes beyond righting the wrongs done to workers the past four years," International President Lonnie R. Stephenson said. "We've been fighting an uphill battle for decades to protect workers' rights, let alone strengthen them, even when we've had allies in the White House.

"Now, we've got people on the inside who are hardwired to fight for us, because they are us," he said. "They know the difference a union makes because they've lived it."

Starting at the top, here's a snapshot of some of those hires.

## Marty Walsh



The popular mayor of Boston, former state lawmaker and President Joe Biden's nominee for labor secretary, Marty Walsh is as grounded and genuine as he's always been, say IBEW leaders in New

England who've known him for decades.

"He's just got a great heart. He helps everybody," said Boston Local 2222 Business Manager Myles Calvey, who also serves on the International Executive Council.

A U.S. Senate vote to confirm Walsh as labor secretary was pending as The Electrical Worker went to press.

After being elected mayor in 2013, Walsh asked Calvey how he could help members of his largely telecom local.

"By getting Fios into Boston," Calvey told him. "And that's what he did. He convinced Verizon to bring Fios here," putting Local 2222 members to work installing and servicing the fiber-optic network.

"There isn't anything that we have asked him that he hasn't responded to, going back as a state rep and as mayor," he said. "He's always thinking about the workers."

That's never in doubt, Boston Local 103 Business Manager Lou Antonellis affirmed.

"Marty is one of us," he said. "He never forgot us as he climbed the ladder. He's never forgotten where he comes from."

The son of Irish immigrants, Walsh followed his father and uncle into Laborers Local 223 and its leadership, going on to head the Greater Boston Building Trades coalition.

"The word 'labor' means everything to me," Walsh said, accepting the nomination in January. "Working people have been struggling for a long time under the erosion of their rights, and the deep inequalities of race, gender, and class. ... Now we have the opportunity to put power back in the hands of working people all across this country."

By choosing Walsh, Biden kept a campaign promise that his labor secretary would come from labor, not just be a supporter of unions, said Second District International Vice President Mike Monahan.

"There's a difference," he said. "You'll never have to worry about Marty compromising his beliefs

or cutting a deal. He is always, always going to be for the worker."

But he said Walsh, who grew up a few blocks from Monahan in the Savin Hill area of Dorchester, is practical, too.

"He gets the economics of labor. We have to be competitive in the building trades. We have to be the best trained, but our contractors have to be competitive if they're going to win work and keep creating jobs," Monahan said. "Marty understands both sides, and he'll run a Labor Department that looks out for working people and our jobs."

Today, in another section of Dorchester, Walsh lives around the corner from Antonellis. But they were labor allies and friends long before they were neighbors.

"When you first meet Marty Walsh, you can't help but like him," Antonellis said. "He's not a pompous guy at all. He's a very down-to-earth person, very easy to talk to."

Both he and Calvey have known Walsh since his first run for the Massachusetts House in 1997. He won and kept winning, always the "go-to guy" for pro-worker legislation, they said.

**"The word 'labor' means everything to me. Now we have the opportunity to put power back in the hands of working people all across this country."**

— Marty Walsh

In 2013, Walsh traded the statehouse for the mayor's office, and was re-elected by a two-thirds majority in 2017. He enacted policies and programs to help lift people out of poverty, while his development plans spurred construction that continues to create good, union jobs for the building trades.

He's aggressive about protecting the people he serves, Antonellis said, pointing to his swift, bold action as COVID-19 struck Boston — an ongoing crisis in American workplaces that the new labor secretary will need to address urgently.

"I don't think there's a mayor in the country that did more on COVID-19 than Mayor Walsh," he said. "He made it an absolute priority."

Walsh even risked the ire of the city's building trades by shutting down construction for a period last spring.

"He said, 'I'm doing it for your members ... the jobsites are not safe right now,'" Antonellis said. "He wouldn't let them reopen unless contractors signed a six-point directive about PPE, social distancing, tem-

perature checks, that kind of thing."

Despite criticism from some quarters, he believes Walsh would win a third term in a landslide if he were on the 2021 ballot. "Marty's been a fixture in union halls" throughout his public service, he said, always accessible and ready to listen.

Antonellis recounts with a laugh being asked who he contacts first in the mayor's office when he needs to reach Walsh.

"There's nobody in between," he said. "I call him, I text him, and usually he gets right back to me."

Antonellis does the same when Walsh calls, sometimes looking for mentors for neighborhood kids curious about the trades or seeking the union's hand with charitable works, such as the toy drive that Local 103 takes on enthusiastically each year.

One day Walsh called after hanging up with the White House. "He was talking to President Biden and now he's on the phone with me," Antonellis marveled. "You kind of get lost in the moment for minute. But he never makes you feel like you're any less important."

He has no doubt that his friend will make workers across the country feel the same way.

## James S. Frederick



An activist who spent 25 years at the United Steelworkers fighting to protect workers' safety and health is President Biden's choice to head OSHA as a deputy secretary of labor.

James

Frederick is tasked with restoring OSHA to its core mission after four years of erosion that allowed law-breaking employers to cut corners with near impunity, including in workplaces with widespread and lethal COVID-19 outbreaks.

"There is no stronger advocate for worker safety in this country than Jim Frederick," said USW International President Tom Conway. "He brings not just a deep commitment to safer workplaces for all Americans, but the expertise and experience to get the job done right."

**"There is no stronger advocate for worker safety in this country than Jim Frederick."**

— USW International President Tom Conway

The USW said Frederick often testified at congressional hearings and federal agencies, leading progress on issues that include workplace violence, beryllium, silica, hazard communication and ergonomics.

On the COVID-19 front, a Biden executive order gives OSHA new tools to combat workplace spread of the virus. The agency now has the power to require employers to provide PPE, enhance cleaning, bring back workers who fall ill and other protections that were merely suggestions under the previous administration.

## Jennifer Jean Kropke



One of the IBEW's own, Jennifer Kropke has been named Director of Energy Jobs at the Department of Energy, bringing her fight for green, union jobs to the national stage.

Kropke

served Los Angeles Local 11 and its NECA partners as the first director of workforce and environmental engagement, focused on creating union jobs in clean energy, port electrification and zero-emission transportation.

**"We're so excited. She's a card-carrying member of Local 11" who will fight for good, union jobs in new energy.**

— Local 11 Business Manager Joël Barton

But her labor roots go even deeper: Her father, Marvin Kropke, was Local 11's business manager for 21 years. Now his daughter is the DOE's first Director of Energy Jobs.

Joël Barton, the local's current business manager, recommended her when the incoming Biden administration was compiling a list of candidates for the DOE team.

"We're so excited to have Jennifer there," Barton said. "She's a card-carrying member of Local 11 and she's also a great mom who cares about a clean environment for her children. She knows it has to be a slow transition, with opportunities for retraining and new jobs that provide good wages and good benefits. Jobs that can sustain a family."

## Jessica Looman



Formerly the executive director of the Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council, Jessica Looman now has a vital role enforcing federal laws protecting workers' wages.

Looman

started her new job on Inauguration Day, officially the deputy administrator of the U.S. Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division.

"Jessica has dedicated her life to the labor movement and has been a pivotal voice in fighting for working families in Minnesota," said Harry Melander, trades council president. "We look forward to watching her bring that same passion and leadership to the Department of Labor." ■



Continued from page 1

# A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER

## IBEW Members Rise to Meet the Challenges of COVID-19 at Work

### Members Answered Call for More Hospitals

As the first wave of the pandemic rapidly spread across the country last spring, a new phrase entered the North American consciousness: bend the curve.

Astonishing pictures were coming in from around the world showing COVID patients dying in hospital hallways as cases far surpassed available beds.

Bending the curve meant slowing the spread so that even if there were just as many cases in the end, there were never too many at once for hospitals to handle.

But the other side of that equation meant expanding hospital capacity, and IBEW members built field hospitals from St. Louis to Albuquerque to a Reno parking garage. Vacant convention centers were transformed into field hospitals by members alongside the Army Corps of Engineers in New York, Detroit, Chicago, Boston and Washington.

According to an analysis by NPR, the Army Corps of Engineers coordinated and funded at least 30 facilities. States announced dozens more, though there is no clearinghouse that keeps track of exactly how many were built.



Members across North America built temporary hospitals in the spring of 2020. One of the largest was built by New York Local 3 in the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, which served more than 1,000 patients.

One of the largest and, sadly, most used, was a 1,900-bed facility in the Jacob Javits Convention Center in Manhattan.

New York City Local 3 members began work in late March; within a week, overflow patients from New York's besieged hospitals began to fill its halls. By the time the first wave subsided in ear-

ly summer, more than 1,000 patients found the care they needed.

Local 3 members worked on three other field hospitals, two on Long Island and a third in Westchester County north of the city.

The field hospital at the Wisconsin State Fairgrounds built by Milwaukee Local 494 members in April treated more than 170 patients, said Local 494 Business Manager Dean Warsh. It was converted into an outpatient treatment clinic in the fall after the state's hospitals caught up and is being repurposed as a vaccination hub.

Even though many of the facilities ultimately went unused, they were seen as a success.

As Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer said last spring, "These 1,000-bed alternate care sites are not necessary; they're not filled. Thank God." ■

### Hydro Workers Hunker Down

Months before workers were called on to sequester at the Priest Rapids Dam, Seattle Local 77 bargained the terms of wages and working conditions — just in case.

"We were ahead of the game," said Business Representative Brian Gray, whose central Washington territory includes Priest Rapids and a second Columbia River dam operated by the Grant County PUD.

But there was still a learning curve last October, the day an employee tested positive for COVID-19. Supervisors scrambled to call in volunteers and run out for snacks, cots and sleeping bags.

Management ironed out the kinks as the first team of IBEW electricians, mechanics and operators hunkered down for eight days and nights, followed by a three-day relief crew.

When the virus forced another 24/7 stay in December, it was shop steward Mike Bradshaw's turn. Preparations included a clean shave, as he and his bearded brothers traded everyday masks for closer-fitting N95s.

A bonus was that they ate like kings, enjoying three hot meals a day from a popular barbecue joint. "I think most of us gained weight," Bradshaw said with a chuckle.

Sequestration came later to Priest Rapids than many other utilities. Early on, grid operators from New York to California clustered for shifts as long as four weeks.

At some U.S. nuclear plants, reactor operators lived onsite in RVs. Mark MacNichol, international representative in the Utility Department, said the Nuclear Regulatory Commission worked with the industry and unions on temporary procedural changes — cooperation that was deeply appreciated.

At Priest Rapids, gratitude is mutual.

"I can't say enough positive things about the union's willingness to engage on what is a life-essential service mission," said Kevin Nordt, PUD general manager and CEO. "We can't keep our customers' lights on without our workers." ■



Some of the Seattle Local 77 members who sequestered last fall at the Columbia River's Priest Rapids Dam to protect their worksite from a COVID-19 outbreak.

### In Ontario, Frontline Healthcare Workers Sacrifice for Little in Return

About 265 of Lincoln, Ontario, Local 636 members define what it means to be on the frontline.

They are personal support workers employed by Empower Simcoe in the central Ontario city of Orillia and at Assisted Living Southwestern Ontario, just across the border from Detroit. They work in private homes and long-term care facilities caring and cleaning for patients suffering from permanent disabilities — Canadians most at risk of contracting COVID-19.

"I don't know if I can give them enough praise," said Business Manager Domenic Murdaca, whose members live throughout the province. "I try to give them support, but I can't thank them enough for the tasks that they're doing."

Despite their extraordinary work over the past year, those Local 636 members have not received the respect they deserve.

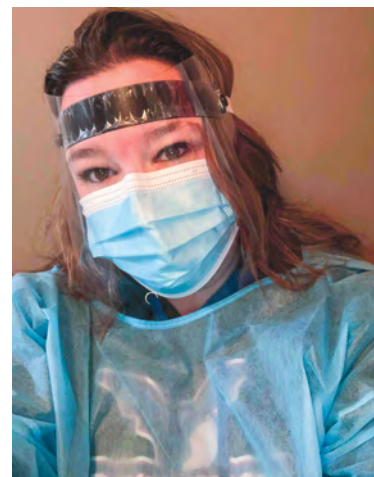
Murdaca noted that even before the pandemic, the Progressive Conservative-controlled provincial government passed legislation that limited employees of publicly funded corporations like Simcoe to just a 1% annual raise. The IBEW and other Canadian unions are challenging the law in court, but a ruling is months away.

Some of the Local 636 members working for Simcoe did not qualify for additional pandemic pay because it required employees to spend at least 50% of their hours directly dealing with patients. Time running essential errands for them — many of whom can't leave their homes — is not rewarded in the same way.

"These Local 636 members are doing some of the most essential work in all of Canada," First District Vice President Thomas Reid said. "The way they're treated by some of our politicians is disappointing, to say the least. Myself and other IBEW leaders will continue to push federal and provincial officials to give them more support."

Murdaca will be among those leaders doing so.

"With the pandemic not getting any better, we're seeing a lot of stress and strain on them," he said. "They are right in the middle of it. They go through hell and we are doing our best to keep up their spirits." ■



Local 636's Melissa Cousineau-Ellis was one of many Simcoe developmental support employees who went above and beyond this year.

### Milwaukee Members Power COVID Research Facility

As the science and research surrounding the coronavirus has progressed over the last year, so has the work of Milwaukee Local 494. Its members joined the ranks of thousands of other IBEW wiremen working on facilities doing groundbreaking research on COVID-19 and helping to outfit facilities for the manufacture of vaccines and testing supplies.

"Our members are proud to be doing their part to rid the world of this deadly disease," said Local 494 Business Manager Dean Warsh. "Their hard work to build the needed laboratory space will help bring this pandemic to an end."

IBEW signatory contractor Preferred Electrical Contractors was tapped in late 2020 to work on a remodel and expansion of Thermo Fisher's East Side Milwaukee facility. Thermo Fisher manufactures ingredients used for the testing of COVID-19 and Preferred Electrical Contractors has the needed expertise in the laboratory and hospital industries. The laboratory buildout involves all new switchgear and control wiring for lab equipment and is employing

8-12 members on any given day. Work on the second phase of the project is expected to wrap up around mid-year.

"This expanded facility will help make the world healthier and safer," Warsh said. "It's Thermo Fisher's partnership with the IBEW that will see this project completed on time and on budget."

From building temporary hospitals to

a recent project working with 3M to manufacture critical N95 masks, Local 494 members are part of the growing ranks of IBEW brothers and sisters across North America working to combat the virus. Read more about members from California, Missouri, Michigan, Massachusetts and more who are helping to fast-track vaccine production in January's Electrical Worker. ■



Milwaukee Local 494 members are powering the expansion of a research facility involved in COVID-19 testing.



## With Little Backup, IBEW Members Keep the Trains Moving

COVID-19 hit home in a very real way for Philadelphia Local 2271 President Pearce Kerr, whose son — a journeyman wireman with Philadelphia Local 98 — tested positive for the coronavirus in December, forcing Kerr into a two-week, self-quarantine lockdown.

“It’s affected different departments in different ways,” said Kerr, the leader of a railroad local with about 120 members who work for Amtrak and several commuter and freight-rail agencies. “Amtrak has been very good with masks, gloves and cleaning supplies, but not a lot of people are taking the rails.”

Near non-existent ridership has greatly affected passenger revenues, which has made it harder for companies to hire workers, Kerr said. “Some departments are running on fumes and overtime,” he said. “In our engine house, we’re supposed to do locomotive inspections every 24 hours, but that’s tough because there’s only so much you can do if you’re short-handed.”

Those pressures are familiar to members across the IBEW’s Railroad branch, said Director Al Russo.

“Since everything changed last March, our members in passenger, commuter and freight rail have been asked to show up and keep doing their work at great



*Philadelphia Local 2271 members helped keep passengers and freight moving over the past year.*

personal risk,” he said. “But they’ve answered that call because they know how critical their jobs are to keeping the U.S. and Canadian economies going strong.

“Whether we’re moving essential workers or transporting important freight,

our railroad members understand what’s at stake and have risen to the challenge of COVID-19,” he said.

In the meantime, Russo feels that members should go ahead and register as soon as they can with their local state health agencies to get in line for a COVID-19 shot. “Sometimes you have to be proactive,” he said. “I think it’s too important to wait for the railroads on this.” ■

## Fielding Customer Calls — Same, but Different

Most days, AT&T’s DirecTV call center in Boise, Idaho, is a sea of sound and activity. The 600-plus bargaining unit members from Boise Local 291 field all varieties of customer calls for the satellite giant, and there’s a constant hum about the place.

But for the last year, it’s been quiet. Last March, as worry about the coronavirus spread, more than half the workers switched to work-from-home virtually overnight. Today, only about 80 representatives work from the building, spaced out among the sea of desks to prevent any spread of the virus by someone unknowingly infected.

“There was no system in place for working from home,” said David Mould, a customer service representative and chief steward for Local 291. “Considering how quickly the company had to change the way it did things and set people up with equipment — desktop computers and company cell phones — it’s all gone really smoothly.”

Senior chief steward Amanda Miller has continued to work from the call center, where the daily routine now involves health screening questions via a phone app, little personal interaction and daily equipment wipe downs, backed up by an industrial supply of sanitizer and face masks.

With most interactions being done remotely, communication has taken extra effort, both within the unit and with supervisors. “It’s not the same when you can’t be in a room together,” Miller said.

For the thousands of customer representatives across the IBEW, it’s been the same story. “We have a job to do,” Mould said. “Whether it’s from home or the office, the need’s still there. People have to stay connected.” ■



*Many call-center members of Boise, Idaho, Local 291 seamlessly shifted to work-from-home last March.*

## No Slow-Down for IBEW’s Manufacturing Members

The roughly 1,000 bargaining unit members at Collins Aerospace in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, produce highly specialized communications equipment for commercial and military aircraft.

So, when COVID-19 began its rapid spread around the globe last March, no one at the Raytheon-owned manufacturer thought for a second about shutting down the operation. The jobs the members of Cedar Rapids Local 1362 do, and the equipment they build, are too critical to let the plant sit idle.

They needed a plan, and they needed it fast.

“The early days were tough,” said Local 1362 Business Manager Shelley Parbs. “No one could get enough masks and sanitizer, and we were no different. They put distancing in place where it was possible and allowed a lot of flexibility when it came to shifts, breaks and lunches.”

Things got a lot better, she said. Today, workers do a daily self-assessment and temperature checks and face masks — or face shields for people with certain medical conditions — are required. Distancing

## In Baltimore, ‘Incredible Team Effort’ Keeps Iconic TV Station On Air

Washington, D.C., Local 1200 member Mike Vedral has worked for 21 years as an engineer for WBAL-TV, the NBC affiliate in Baltimore. Nothing prepared him and his colleagues for the challenges of the last year.

Like members at dozens of local stations across the U.S., early fears of COVID-19 sent them scrambling as they worked with management and other employees to keep the station on the air and transition to remote news broadcasts nearly overnight. WBAL’s studios and offices were closed except to essential personnel during the pandemic’s early days.

“It was constant stress,” Vedral said. “Even when I went home, you worried about what was next.”

Vedral said that was especially true in the rush to a remote operation during the first two weeks last March. Anchors suddenly had to read the news from home. Reporters filed reports from the field — sometimes from their cars. Editors had to edit from home. Technicians accustomed to producing a telecast from a studio now had to do so on a laptop.

Engineers and technicians worked on picnic tables under open-air awnings and tents outside the office with a pair of production trucks nearby. Staffers began working in an open-air garage when weather turned cool.

Some anchors and staffers have returned to the building while observing social distancing, but many of the challenges remain, Vedral said.

“That was an incredible team effort by everyone at the station,” he said. “Union members, nonunion employees, all the way up to corporate. We could not have done this without the help of everyone down the line.”

“So many of our Broadcast members have adapted quickly to this new reality over the past year. It’s been a struggle at times, but they’re true professionals and they’ve proven their value many times over,” said Broadcasting and Telecommunications Director Robert Prunn. ■



*Washington D.C. Local 1200 member Mike Vedral, an engineer at WBAL-TV in Baltimore.*



*Manufacturing jobs looked different before COVID-19. Today, masks, gloves and temperature checks are standard for Local 1362 members at Collins Aerospace.*

is still followed, and that flexibility allows concerned workers to choose shifts where they won’t come into contact with as many people or to skip lunch and take that time at the end of the day.

For the most part, the measures have worked. Parbs said one member went to the hospital early on, but she’s heard of no

serious cases since. “The work we do is critical to the economy and national security. We were always going to make it work.”

“Our manufacturing members have really stepped up across the IBEW,” said Manufacturing Director Randy Middleton. “We’ve met this pandemic head-on and kept the lines running.” ■

A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER *continued on page 6*



Continued from page 5

# A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER

## ‘Temporary Normal’ on Construction Sites After Pandemic’s Fearful Early Days

As 2020 began, construction in North America was in a yearslong boom with walkthroughs and open calls in many locals.

The pandemic was like an earthquake, said Construction and Maintenance Director Mike Richard.

“It was scary, and it was unclear how much damage there would be, but the foundations were strong,” he said. “Wherever governments allowed it, work came back quickly or even picked up.”

“There was definitely a learning curve,” said Augusta, Ga., Local 1579 Business Manager Will Salter.

The largest construction project in North America, the Vogtle nuclear power plant, is in his jurisdiction. The changes to safeguard trades workers at Vogtle mirrored the changes on construction sites everywhere, just on a larger scale.

In April, Southern Company converted 3-4 acres of parking lots into an onsite medical complex with trailers and tents to battle an outbreak among the 6,000 trade workers, including 1,500 IBEW members. Anyone with symptoms or who felt sick was tested and sent home — with 8 hours a day pay — for 14 days.

“They could have treated it like any other sickness; what they offered was generous, but not different from what everyone else was doing,” Salter said. “At the time, we were worried and needed to know there was some security out there.”

Nearly 500 workers took a voluntary layoff. But, Salter said, most came back within a few weeks. They arrived at a transformed jobsite: masks were required. Plexiglass dividers were in all the break rooms. The buses on the massive site were stopped.

Vogtle did not adopt some of the practices that became popular elsewhere like issuing workers RFID chips that chirp if people get too close for too long, or changing punch lists so that crews would be smaller and less dense. Some business managers reported fewer fights with contractors over restrooms and hygiene facilities on smaller jobs.

Salter said he doesn’t see many of the practices outliving the crisis.

“This is the temporary normal. The company and contractors are doing their best and the members are doing their best,” Salter said. “We would love to see this gone by winter and next year we can run around the job without masks. It’d be great if it was gone by summer. It gets awfully hot down here.” ■



*Construction slowed briefly in the early days of the pandemic, but — with many new safety rules — it has roared back in most places, including at the Vogtle nuclear plant in Georgia.*

## Linework was Made for Social Distancing, but Challenges Remain



*Even linework had to change this past year, primarily in how people got to the job and where they would stay during emergency work.*

One person to a room became the norm, a change eagerly welcomed by the hotel and motel industry, which was hit hard when tourism and business travel evaporated.

Colston joined weekly calls with the owners of investor-owned utilities through the Edison Electrical Institute to discuss best practices and policies.

“What we have learned is that we didn’t miss a beat in an emergency,” Colston said. “There were very few COVID cases once we got the safeguards in place. Our partners and our members have done a really good job of protecting themselves and getting the job done.” ■

Linework, while always a dangerous job, would appear to be somewhat immune from the risks of interaction that COVID-19 creates.

It’s often preformed, outside, alone in a lift, up in the air, deep in the woods or high in the mountains.

But even outside linework has been changed by the pandemic, said Utility Director Donnie Colston, because you still have to get there. You still work on a team.

“The biggest change is the isolation of the crews,” Colston said.

The utility truck is almost always home to a single person. No more mustering at a single dispatch. Crews meet at substations or even dispatch straight from home. And the crew you work with stays the crew you work with. There’s no overlap with others.

“The whole point was to limit exposure,” he said.

The difference was especially marked during mutual assistance calls after disasters, often hurricanes.

“Historically they would have a gym of a local school with cots to all sleep together, share the same showering facilities, same cafeteria. They would all be together,” Colston said. “Now you have to limit the number of people working together and make sure they don’t interact with other crews from other companies.”

## GROUNDING IN HISTORY

### The IBEW’s Historic Firsts

The IBEW is an organization blessed with a rich history. From our humble beginnings at the dawn of the electrical age, we have persevered through economic depressions, employer intimidation, world wars, and, yes, pandemics. Through it all, our members continually rose to the challenge, fighting not only to secure our rights as workers but our rights to a dignified life as well. This year the IBEW will celebrate its 130th anniversary, and we would do well to reflect upon the great legacy our forebears left us. A genuine understanding of the past allows for a better appreciation of the present, and it is for that reason that we introduce this new monthly feature.

Drawing from our extensive historical archives to find the stories, people and artifacts that helped shape our legacy, we hope you’ll find something unexpected here each month and that you’ll be inspired by the accomplishments and activism of your IBEW sisters and brothers who came before you.

In celebration of this first article, we thought it fitting to highlight other “firsts” in the IBEW’s history. Before our founders could ever dream of championing workers’ rights, they first had to find and convince disparate tradesmen to join up. This effort was often obstructed by barriers such as hostile work environments, intimidation from corporate bosses and even violent struggle. But the barriers of race and gender were in many ways the least acknowledged and still the hardest to overcome. Below you will find a small sample of IBEW pioneers who broke through those barriers and made our organization better for it.

**Mary Hoznik:** In 1893 Hoznik joined Local 1 as stenographer for Grand Secretary-Treasurer John T. Kelly. In 1896, she became the National Brotherhood of Electrical Workers’ first woman organizer.

**Local 80, Cleveland, Ohio:** Chartered in 1897 as the first local made up entirely of female electrical workers, its president was Mae Patterson of The Walker Manufacturing Co.

**Local 100, Jacksonville, Fla.:** Chartered in 1900 as the first local exclusively for African-American workers. Its president was J.H. Mays of the Southern Bell Telephone Co. Fierce debate over its legitimacy led to a national referendum in 1901 to address “the color line.” Although the vote failed, it didn’t stop Boston Local 103 and New York Local 119 to begin issuing cards to African-American workers in large numbers.

**Julia O’Connor:** In 1919 O’Connor was elected president of telephone operators Local 1A in Boston. She then led a successful 5-day strike against New England Telephone, securing workers’ rights to collective bargaining. In an acknowledgment of her efforts, the IBEW created a Telephone Operators Department at the International Office and installed O’Connor as its director, the first woman to hold this title.

**Rufus Taylor:** In 1919 Taylor joined Chicago Local 134 and became the city’s first African-American electrical worker.

**Charles Stewart:** A member of Local 134, Stewart was hired by Berry Electric Co. in 1942 to become the first African-American foreman.

**Lawrence Tafoya:** A member of Los Angeles Local 1710, Tafoya was appointed an International Representative in 1967, the first Mexican-American to hold that title.

**Marlene Motel:** In 1969 Motel joined Cicero, Ill., Local 1859 and began her apprenticeship at Western Electric’s Hawthorne Manufacturing Plant. She graduated in 1972 as one of the nation’s first journeywoman electricians.

**Roy Stafford:** A member of Chicago Local 1806, Stafford became the first African-American on the international staff when he joined the newly created Department of Organizing Operations in 1972.

**Cathy Spielfogel:** In 1972 Spielfogel graduated from the climbing school of Newark, N.J., Local 826 and became the IBEW’s first linewoman.

**Renata Loveless:** A member of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Local 204, Loveless became the first female foreman in 1985 when she oversaw 10 laborers at the Duane County Energy Center.

**Asenath McLeod:** A member of Durham, N.C., Local 553, McLeod became the IBEW’s first woman business manager in 1991.

**Royetta Sanford:** A member of Los Angeles Local 18, Sanford became the first African-American director at the International Office when she was hired as the Director of the Human Services Department in 1992.

**Keith Edwards:** A member of Local 48 in Portland, Ore., he became the first African-American to be elected business manager of a construction local in 2001 and currently serves as president of the Electrical Workers Minority Caucus.

Have you visited the Henry Miller Museum in St. Louis, located in the renovated boarding house where the National Brotherhood of Electrical Workers was born? Plan a visit and help support the Electrical Workers Historical Society at [nbew-ibewmuseum.org](http://nbew-ibewmuseum.org). Have an idea for “Grounded in History?” Send it to [Curtis\\_Bateman@IBEW.org](mailto:Curtis_Bateman@IBEW.org).



# NORTH OF 49° | AU NORD DU 49° PARALLÈLE

## After Years of Work, Electrical Company's Employees Say 'Yes' to the IBEW

**E**arly last year, news reached Toronto Local 353 that CEC Services Ltd., based in nearby Aurora, Ontario, was looking to buy an IBEW-signatory contractor through its parent company, the Beswick Group of Companies.

That caught the attention of Local 353 organizers, who thought for some time the CEC would be a natural fit in the IBEW. It's an electrical services contractor with a history of successful projects in constructing hospitals and long-term care facilities, according to the company's website.

The problem was that its employees already had representation, albeit from an organization not necessarily looking out for their best interests.

They were aligned with the Christian Labour Association of Canada, which critics charge is a trade union in name only because it often negotiates contracts favorable to management. Canadian labour activists often call them "fake unions." Local 353 approached the employees about representation many years earlier but they voted to side with CLAC in 2005 and stayed with it ever since. Attempts since then didn't gain much traction.

There was a glimmer of hope, however. The agreement negotiated with the labour association was expiring at the end of 2020, so by provincial law, Local 353 and other unions had the right during November and December to approach CEC Services employees about new representation. The final two months of a contract are commonly called the "open period" by organizers.

Led by Membership Development Coordinator Gord Nye and Membership Development Representative Andrew White, the effort convinced CEC electricians to agree to IBEW representation over CLAC, adding about 70 new members in and around Toronto.

"The moral of the story is to be patient and hang in there," said Bill Martindale, a First District organizer for Eastern Canada who was a Local 353 organizer for many years before joining the district staff. "You never know what will happen."

First District International Vice President Thomas Reid praised everyone involved for being aggressive when they saw a chance to strike an agreement with Beswick, one of the more successful contractors in the Toronto area.

"Growing our construction membership in Canada is difficult during this pandemic," Reid said. "I couldn't be more proud of everyone at Local 353 for their work on this drive. Our organizers saw an opening and built relationships with the CEC employees, and management quickly realized we offered an upgrade over their previous agreement."

"I also want to thank Bill and all our staffers who kept this company on our radar over the years. Successful organiz-

ing drives usually don't happen overnight and this certainly is proof of that."

Nye and White did much of the legwork on the campaign. It started with a card-signing effort to ensure they were accessible to all the potential new members.

"When we met with them, we heard how pleased they were that we were treating them with respect," Nye said. "The conversations were candid and open. They were not afraid to ask tough questions. We were happy to answer their questions anytime, day or night."

Those CEC employees were spread over an area that stretched about two

hours outside Toronto in all directions. There were days when Nye and White drove more than 400 kilometers in and around Canada's largest city to meet with workers. Upon arriving at the jobsite, they observed social distancing requirements and used the appropriate PPE during the COVID-19 pandemic.

White said the employees made it clear they were not upset with CEC management. Rather, they were disappointed with CLAC, which they saw as increasingly out of touch.

"They mentioned numerous times what pleasant experiences they've had [with the company], which sometimes is

rare for us to hear," he said. "They spoke not just highly of each other but also the contractor. For them, there was no fear of retribution from management."

They knew their employer well. CEC management accepted the new representation quickly, Nye said, especially after the IBEW showed how potential new wage rates would not have a negative impact on their costs. Local 353 also agreed to accept apprentices in the CLAC training programs as they were. Their hours worked would count and they wouldn't be compelled to do upgrading as a condition of employment.

Martindale also gave credit to James Barry, the executive secretary/treasurer of

the Ontario Construction Trades Council and a former business manager of Ottawa Local 586, for his assistance with the drive. Nye and White were assisted by newly-elected Local 353 Business Manager Lee Caprio.

"I welcome the CEC employees to the brotherhood and thank them for their confidence," Reid said. "This serves as inspiration for other Ontario electrical workers represented by so-called unions that really are more interested in servicing management. You can make a change for the better during your open period. Our organizers will meet with you any place at any time to make that happen." ■

## Après plusieurs années de travail, les employés d'une compagnie électrique disent « oui » à la FIOE

**P**lutôt cette année, la section locale 353 à Toronto a appris que CEC Services Limited, basée à proximité d'Aurora en Ontario cherchait à acheter un entrepreneur signataire à la FIOE par l'intermédiaire de sa compagnie mère le Beswick Group of Companies.

Cette situation a attiré l'attention des organisateurs de la section locale 353, que pendant longtemps ont pensé que le CEC serait un bon complément à la FIOE. Selon le site Web de la compagnie, il s'agit d'un entrepreneur de service électrique qui a déjà réalisé avec succès plusieurs projets de constructions d'hôpitaux et d'établissements de soins de longue durée.

Le problème était que ses employés étaient déjà représentés par un autre syndicat, quoique cette organisation en question ne veillait pas nécessairement à l'intérêt des employés.

Ils étaient affiliés à l'Association travailliste chrétienne du Canada (Christian Labour Association of Canada — CLAC) que les critiques affirment être un syndicat de nom seulement puisqu'il négocie souvent des conventions collectives favorables à la direction. Les militants syndicaux canadiens les nomment souvent « faux syndicats ». Il y a plusieurs années, la section locale 353 a abordé les employés au sujet de la représentation, mais en 2005 les membres ont voté en faveur de la CLAC et ils y sont restés depuis. Les tentatives faites depuis n'ont pas eu beaucoup de succès.

Il y avait cependant une lueur d'espoir. La convention collective négociée venait à échéance à la fin de l'année. En

vertu de la loi provinciale, le local 353 et d'autres syndicats avaient le droit de solliciter les employés du CEC pendant les mois de novembre et de décembre pour leur proposer une nouvelle représentation. Les deux derniers mois de la convention collective sont généralement appelés « recrutement syndical » par les organisateurs.

Dirigé par le coordinateur du développement de l'effectif, Gord Nye et le représentant du développement de l'effectif Andrew White, l'effort a convaincu les électriciennes et les électriciens du CEC d'accepter la représentation de la FIOE plutôt que celle de la CLAC, ajoutant environ 70 nouveaux membres à Toronto et dans les environs.

« La morale de l'histoire est d'être patient », déclare Bill Martindale, un organisateur au premier district pour l'est du Canada, qui faisait partie du local 353 à titre d'organisateur pendant plusieurs années avant d'avoir un poste au premier district. « On ne sait jamais ce qui peut arriver. »

Le vice-président international Tom Reid du premier district a félicité toutes les personnes qui ont saisi l'occasion pour conclure une entente avec Beswick, un des entrepreneurs ayant le plus de succès dans la région de Toronto.

« Augmenter le nombre des membres dans l'industrie de la construction au Canada est très difficile pendant la pandémie », déclare M. Reid. « Je ne saurais être plus fier de tous les membres de la section locale 353 pour leur travail dans cette campagne. Nos organisateurs ont vu une ouverture et ils ont établi des liens avec les employés et la direction du CEC. Ils se sont vite aperçus

qu'on offrait une convention collective plus favorable par rapport à la précédente.

« Je veux également remercier Bill et toute l'équipe d'avoir surveillé la compagnie de près au fil des ans. Des campagnes de syndicalisation réussies ne se font pas du jour au lendemain et celle-ci en est certainement la preuve. »

M. Nye et M. White ont fait le plus gros du travail sur la campagne. Tout a commencé dans le but de s'assurer que les cartes d'adhésion syndicale étaient accessibles à tous les membres potentiels.

« Nous avons entendu à quel point ils étaient heureux d'être traités avec respect quand nous les avons rencontrés », mentionne M. Nye. « Les conversations étaient franches et ouvertes. Ils n'avaient pas peur de poser des questions difficiles. Nous étions heureux de répondre à leurs questions à toute heure, le jour comme la nuit. »

Ces employés étaient répartis dans une région qui s'étendait sur environ deux heures à l'extérieur de Toronto dans chaque direction. Il y a des jours où M. Nye et M. White parcouraient 400 km dans la plus grande ville du Canada et dans les environs pour rencontrer les travailleurs. En arrivant sur le chantier, ils respectaient les exigences de la distanciation physique et utilisaient l'équipement de protection individuelle (ÉPI) appropriée pendant la COVID-19.

M. White dit que les employés ont clairement indiqué qu'ils n'avaient pas de problème avec la direction du CEC. Ils étaient plutôt déçus de la CLAC, qui considéraient être de moins en moins à l'écoute.

« Ils ont mentionné à plusieurs reprises d'avoir eu des expériences

agréables [avec la compagnie], ce qui nous semblait plutôt rare, » dit-il. Non seulement qu'ils avaient une bonne estime de l'un envers l'autre, mais aussi de l'entrepreneur. Ils ne craignaient aucunes représailles de la direction. »

Ils connaissaient bien leur employeur. La direction du CEC a rapidement accepté la nouvelle représentation, dit M. Nye, surtout après que la FIOE ait montré que les nouveaux taux de salaires n'affecteraient pas leurs coûts. Le local 353 a également accepté les apprentis qui suivaient déjà le programme de formation de la CLAC. Les heures travaillées seront comptabilisées et les membres ne seront pas obligés de suivre une formation complémentaire comme condition d'emploi.

M. Martindale a également donné du mérite à James Barry, le secrétaire-trésorier exécutif du Construction Trades Council de l'Ontario (Conseil des métiers de la construction de l'Ontario) et ancien gérant d'affaires de la section locale 586 à Ottawa pour son aide dans la campagne. M. Nye et M. White ont eu de l'aide de Lee Caprio, le nouveau gérant d'affaires du local 353.

« Je souhaite la bienvenue aux employés du CEC à la Fraternité et je les remercie de leur confiance, » dit M. Reid. « Cette campagne servira comme source d'inspiration aux autres travailleuses et travailleurs en électricité qui sont représentés par leur soi-disant syndicat qui est plus intéressé à rendre service à la direction. Tu peux faire le changement pour le mieux durant la période de recrutement syndical. Nos organisateurs vont vous rencontrer à tout moment pour faire bouger les choses. » ■

# THE FRONT LINE: POLITICS & JOBS

## Biden Fires Union-Busting NLRB Lawyer, Names Pro-Worker Champion as Chair

President Joe Biden began to make good on his promises to America's workers immediately upon taking office Jan. 20, demanding the resignation of the fiercely anti-union attorney for the National Labor Relations Board, then firing him when he refused.

General Counsel Peter Robb, installed by the Trump administration in 2017, instigated many of the Republican-led NLRB's attacks on workers' rights, safety and economic security.

In a letter sent moments after the swearing-in at noon, Biden gave Robb until 5 p.m. to resign. He refused and contested his termination, citing the 10 months left in his four-year term.

His firing ignited an ongoing debate among legal experts, legislators and others over the president's power to terminate federal officials with time left on their terms, and the precedent it could set.

For union leaders, it's simple.

"Peter Robb has been a union-buster for 40 years, since he helped President Reagan fire the nation's unionized air traffic controllers in 1981," International President Lonnie R. Stephenson said. "In private practice, he viciously derailed organizing drives, including one of ours."

He said Robb never had any business holding power inside an agency created to protect workers, including — as specified in the first article of the 1935 National Labor Relations Act — their right to organize and bargain collectively.

"He thumbed his nose at the NLRB's mission every day he worked there," Stephenson said. "He was fired for cause."

He wasn't alone. On Biden's first day, he also fired Kathleen Kraninger, who had three years left as director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Turning her back on desperate Americans, she acted instead to protect and empower predatory lenders and debt collectors.

By his second day, Biden also had fired Alice Stock, the NLRB anti-union deputy general counsel who'd taken over for Robb.

Biden appointed Peter Ohr, the board's regional director in Chicago, as acting general counsel. In 2014, Ohr notably upheld the rights of Northwestern University football players who'd voted to organize a union — a pioneering decision even though the full NLRB overruled it.

Ohr said he will vigorously enforce the board's mission under the NLRA, "to ensure workers' fundamental rights of association at the workplace are protected to the fullest extent of the law."

During Robb's tenure, the GOP-led board undermined the NLRA, acting to expand employer power, allow managers to search workers' cars and personal items, restrict union apparel, eject union organizers from public spaces, more easi-



"He thumbed his nose at the NLRB's mission every day he worked there. He was fired for cause."

— International President Lonnie R. Stephenson on former general counsel Peter Robb

◀ Former NLRB General Counsel Peter Robb

ly withdraw union recognition, discriminate against union members in the workplace, thwart protests and disregard the rights of workers at subcontractors and franchises, among other harm done.

But things began to change overnight Jan. 20. In addition to hiring Ohr, Biden appointed pro-worker member Lauren McFerran as chair.

She replaced union-avoidance lawyer John Ring at the helm of the five-seat board. A 3-2 split favors the president's party, allowing for vigorous debate. But in practice the past two years, the minority was all but silenced.

One or both of the seats that belonged to Democrats during the Trump administration has been vacant since early 2019, due to then-Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's refusal to act on nominations.

McFerran was the only member left looking out for workers and unions. While unable to sway her counterparts, she compiled a record of blistering dissents that methodically cracked the shaky foundations of the majority's 3-1 rulings.

But for seven months when her first term expired in December 2019, workers had no voice at all. Steered by Robb, the all-Republican board issued 3-0 rulings against workers with abandon.

McConnell finally relented last July, allowing McFerran to be reconfirmed. Although she has some leverage now as chair, she is still the lone Democrat until the Senate confirms a nominee for the vacant seat.

Even then, Democrats won't have a 3-2 majority until at least August, when one of the three GOP seats opens up.

Stephenson said unions will push the Senate's new Democratic majority to act quickly on NLRB confirmations and other worker-friendly nominees for the Department of Labor and other federal agencies.

"President Biden didn't waste a minute doing right by workers and unions, as he's done for a half century as a U.S. senator and vice president," he said. "The future for American workers and their families is brighter than it's been for a long time as long as lawmakers in the narrow majorities we've elected to the House and Senate have his back. It's up to us to make sure they do." ■

## The First Energy Bill in Half a Generation Means IBEW Jobs, Now and in the Future

The most important reform to U.S. energy policy in more than a decade passed nearly unnoticed at the end of December.

Multibillion-dollar reforms to one of the largest parts of the U.S. economy affecting millions of working families were wedged into a corner of the gargantuan \$900 billion Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act. It was passed simultaneously with the \$1.4 trillion omnibus government spending measure, distinguishing the single 5,000 page, \$2.3 trillion dollar bill as the largest in U.S. history.

However the sausage was made, the energy policy components of the bill finally, if not fully, brought some high priorities for the membership of the IBEW into law.

The energy-related sections of the bill included a decade's worth of pent-up ideas with all or part of 37 Senate bills — including 29 bipartisan bills — sponsored by 70 senators.

"Think about what has happened in the last 10 years: the revolution in renewables, the rise of domestic natural gas, the closure of nuclear power stations, smart metering and smart grids. That happened with Congress all but on the side-

lines," said Political and Legislative Director Austin Keyser. "We hope that this is just a sign of what is coming as new leadership steps up on Capitol Hill."

The bill authorizes more than \$35 billion over the next decade for carbon capture and removal, energy storage, wind, solar and advanced nuclear.

It extends renewable energy and building efficiency tax incentives, authorizes a record number of Army Corps of Engineers projects, opens the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission up to the public and phases out the use of hydrofluorocarbons, an extremely potent greenhouse gas thousands of times worse than carbon dioxide.

While Davis-Bacon prevailing-wage standards won't apply to all the bill's spending, as Democrats originally wanted, they will be applied for the first time to spending in solar, wind, waterpower, grid modernization and carbon removal research and development.

"This is a win for organized labor, sure, but it's also a win for taxpayers," Keyser said. "Our industry has never been one where you want to cut corners on competence and safety."

The majority of the reforms affecting IBEW members were in a section of the bill called the Energy Act of 2020.

The two largest beneficiaries were advanced nuclear research, which received a combined \$6.6 billion, and carbon capture, storage and removal, which received a combined \$6.2 billion, according to an analysis by professor Leah Stokes of the Bren School of Environmental Science & Management at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

"Despite the severe pressure it has been put under, nuclear power is a necessary component of the transition to a carbon-free energy future. We need to invest in it like our future depends on it, because it does," said Utility Director Donnie Colston.

A separate section will release \$24 billion to support the deployment of carbon-reducing projects that was already authorized but the Trump administration refused to disburse. The Title XVII loan program, first authorized in 2005 and expanded in 2009, now must use the \$10.9 billion for advanced nuclear energy, \$8.5 billion for advanced fossil energy, and \$4.6 billion

for renewable projects funding.

The money for advanced nuclear will support projects that use lower-radiation fuel, smaller, modular reactors that are cheaper to build and can shut themselves down without human intervention, as well as reactors that use recycled fuel now regarded as dangerous waste.

The Department of Energy also received nearly \$5 billion to establish a program to bring fusion power — the process at work inside stars — from experiments on lab benches to the market.

While the funding for research that may reshape IBEW jobs in the future was substantial, there is a great deal in the bill that will boost IBEW jobs now.

One of the highest priorities for the IBEW was the extension of multiple tax credits that have kickstarted many renewable energy projects.

The investment tax credit (ITC, mostly used by solar) was extended two years to 2023 and will now include waste-heat-to-power projects; the production tax credit (PTC, mostly used by wind) got a one-year extension until 2023.

The 30% offshore wind credit was extended five years to 2025.

Research on renewables got a \$4 billion bump and the energy secretary will be required to issue permits for at least 25 GW of solar, wind or geothermal electricity projects on federal land by 2025.

The carbon capture credit had given developers of carbon capture projects until the end of 2023 to start construction. Now, they will have until the close of 2025.

The Energy Department will also begin funding research projects on ways to remove carbon directly from the atmosphere.

The commercial building tax deduction for energy efficiency upgrades was made permanent and there was increased funding for myriad programs that encourage energy efficiency in existing buildings and industry including rebates for the installation of efficient motors and transformers.

There is also \$1 billion for energy storage, \$2.4 billion for grid modernization and \$1.7 billion to expand the Weatherization Assistance Program, which helps fund energy-efficiency retrofits for low-income homeowners.

Billions in work from these initiatives could go to IBEW signatory contractors and result in thousands of IBEW construction jobs.

For utility members, Congress provided relief for struggling employers, weighed down by nonpayment from customers struggling from the pandemic-related economic downturn.

Congress injected \$3.75 billion into the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program and payments from the \$25 billion rental assistance program in the coronavirus relief bill can now be used to pay utility bills.

It's a good start, Keyser said.

"I'm not going to pretend this is anybody's ideal bill," he said. "But this one actually became law, which makes it the very rarest kind of bill these last few years."

And with a new majority leader in the Senate and a friend in the White House, International President Lonnie R.



Congress passed the first major energy reform in more than a decade as 2020 ended.

Credit: Creative Commons / Flickr user 100is now





*Reps. Donald Norcross of New Jersey and Mark Pocan of Wisconsin have announced the start of a Congressional Labor Caucus. Norcross is also a member of Folsom, N.J., Local 351.*

Stephenson said he is confident this is just the start.

"For too long working people have been told we have to choose between an energy sector that works with the environment and one that creates good jobs. It's always been a lie, and this bill proves it again," Stephenson said. "Now that they are in power, our job is to give our friends the support they need to create an energy sector that works for us and for future members of the IBEW." ■

## House Members Announce Labor Caucus

Two members of the U.S. House of Representatives, Donald Norcross of New Jersey and Mark Pocan of Wisconsin, announced the start of a Congressional Labor Caucus to advance the needs of the labor movement, combat the issues working families face and connect legislators directly with unions and union leaders.

"Labor has shaped my life, taking me from the construction site to Congress," said Norcross, who is a member and former business agent of Folsom, N.J., Local 351. "While the Trump Administration has tried to diminish labor rights, President Joe Biden's incoming administration understands the dignity of work and that workers' rights are human rights. Every American worker should have the opportunity to earn a fair day's wage for a fair day's work, and working families deserve a bigger voice in Congress. I look forward to working together with our brothers and sisters in labor to pass legislation for American workers and their futures."

While Congress has had caucuses dedicated to the issues of working families before, this marks the first time such a group has been started by two union members in the House. Pocan is a member of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades. Announced on Nov. 13, the caucus already has close to 100 members.

"What's interesting is that this really crosses most of your traditional Democratic factional lines, because what most people talk about at home are core economic issues," Pocan told Jacobin magazine. "Can they pay their rent or mortgage? Do

they have health insurance for their family? Can they take a family vacation? Almost

all of those intersect with issues that are lumped into the labor category."

Among its priorities will be passing legislation like the Protecting the Right to Organize, or PRO, Act and the Raise the Wage Act. The PRO Act would make it easier for people to join unions through a number of reforms including modernizing the definition of unfair labor practices and allowing fines or lawsuits against employers who try to keep workers from forming bargaining units. The Raise the Wage Act would increase the federal minimum wage from its current level of \$7.25 an hour — a number that hasn't increased in a decade — to \$15.

Both bills passed in the House but stalled in the Republican-controlled Senate. With the start of a new legislative session in January, they will need to be reintroduced and essentially restart the process over again. In addition to legislation, the caucus can also encourage exec-

utive action, which goes through the president, like reversing much of the damage done to unions and federal workers through Trump's pen.

Norcross and Pocan are also prioritizing a coronavirus-related emergency temporary standard for working people through the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Despite the skyrocketing number of cases still being reported across the country, the federal agency tasked with worker safety has largely avoided doing anything concrete.

Labor caucus members, as well as the unions they plan to work with, are hopeful the new administration, led by Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, will be more interested in using OSHA for its original and intended purpose and issue standards that keep all workers as safe as possible during the ongoing pandemic.

The new labor group has already sent a letter to congressional leadership

requesting funding for programs that implement and enforce worker safety measures, protect the right to organize at work, and provide access to employer and employee training — especially registered apprenticeships — in any final appropriations package for the 2021 fiscal year.

Norcross also worked with New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy on a state-level mandatory safety standard to keep workers safe from the coronavirus. Murphy signed the executive order at the end of October.

"When you give working people a voice everybody wins, and with two card-carrying union members at the helm of this new labor caucus, we can start to do just that," said International President Lonnie R. Stephenson. "Whether it's getting pro-worker safety standards through OSHA, the PRO Act passed, or new executive actions, we stand ready to work with our allies for the benefit of all our members, and all working people across the country." ■

## ORGANIZING WIRE

### IBEW Organizing Illinois' Growing Wind Energy Industry

Union membership is low in the growing wind energy industry once construction wraps up. But with the help of the IBEW, Jeremy Warren and fellow wind technicians at Invenergy's Grand Ridge Energy Center in northeastern Illinois are looking to add to those figures.

With the support of his colleagues, Warren contacted the Sixth District office last June and inquired about union representation. By year's end, even as the COVID-19 pandemic forced their meetings to be held virtually and voting to be conducted by mail, the bargaining unit voted 10-4 to seek IBEW representation. They will become members of Springfield, Ill., Local 51 when agreement is reached on a first contract.

"We had talked about it in years past, but it wasn't regarded as a real possibility," said Warren, who now is part of the contract negotiation committee. "It came to the point where we didn't feel as valued and we felt like our careers should be a little more legitimate. I think it helps make the entire industry more legitimate."

It's not a large organizing win in terms of numbers, but it gives the IBEW a foothold in an industry expected to grow for the foreseeable future, said Joe DiMichele, the Sixth District's lead professional and industrial organizer for Illinois.

Only 6% of U.S. wind energy employees are unionized, according to a report released last year by the National Association of State Energy Officials and the Energy Futures Initiative. Grand Ridge Center is considered a jewel among Chicago-based Invenergy's properties, DiMichele said. The company has been lauded in industry media for how the facility has helped it become a leader in both energy production and storage.

"Invenergy is a large player in renewable energy," DiMichele said. "They have a lot of wind farms and gas-fired plants. These issues raised at Grand Ridge are important across the industry. All Invenergy workers deserve representation and a voice at the table along with safety and dignity."

Organizing during the pandemic is a challenge because it removes most of the valuable face-to-face contact with potential new members, DiMichele said. But the technicians at Grand Ridge had a good idea of what they wanted from the start, which helped overcome that obstacle.

Local 51 Business Manager Bobby Wedell and Wes Heckman, a Local 51 organizer and staff representative, noticed much the same thing.

"This is a really big win for us," Wedell said. "With green energy growing the way it is and the push for renewables by our state government here in Illinois, we think it's a really big deal."

Grand Ridge is in LaSalle County, about 60 miles southwest of Chicago.

"It's kind of a flagship facility for Invenergy," Wedell said. "It has a really nice building and before the pandemic, it was the place for Invenergy to take people and show off a little bit."

Heckman noted the organizing win was a team effort across the IBEW. He consulted with the staff at Seattle Local 77, which has bargaining agreements with Invenergy. He and others involved with the effort were disappointed when management tried to convince technicians to reject representation, especially after the company asked the IBEW and other unions for help in getting public utility status in Illinois and other states.

"They [the wind technicians] understand that a boss' promises are temporary, but



*Jeremy Warren, fourth from the left, stands with other wind technicians at Invenergy's Grand Ridge Energy Center after they voted to accept representation from Springfield, Ill., Local 51.*

a union contract is in writing," Heckman said. "It wasn't about the wages for them but about Invenergy's policies that the company can change at any time. They had some real concerns about that."

Warren said the Grand Ridge wind techs have not been treated poorly by company management but they thought a commitment to safety was not as important as it had been in the past. Some raises were slow in coming because managers did not follow through on evaluations and proper procedure at the correct time. Promised improvements failed to materialize on some issues.

The initial bargaining unit will consist of 13 wind technicians along with an administrative assistant, who Warren said is invaluable to him and his colleagues.

"We felt like she deserved more in terms of representation," he said. "Ultimately, my goal is to get her a more appropriate level of compensation because she has been underappreciated."

Not surprisingly, with its flat terrain, central location and largely rural population south of the Chicago suburbs, Illinois ranks high among U.S. states in wind energy produced. The industry employs more than 8,000 workers in the state, third highest in the nation, according to the American Wind Energy Association.

But there is plenty of room for growth. The Illinois Legislature will consider a bill this year that calls for the state to use 100% renewable energy by 2050.

Illinois also will be one of four states along the proposed Grain Belt Express, an Invenergy-owned project that would transport wind power from western Kansas to markets in the eastern United States. Grain Belt is the reason the company asked the IBEW to support its attempts to be declared a utility, which makes it easier to construct the line. The IBEW and other trade unions supported those requests.

"I'm interested to see what happens once we get a first agreement with this group and if we can get the snowball rolling," Wedell said. "It's not just here in Illinois. These wind techs are talking to other techs all over the country."

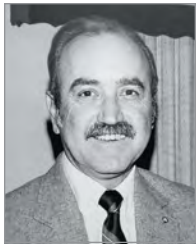
"I'm not kidding myself. I know it's not going to be easy [to organize other units]. But I'm personally looking forward to talking to them and showing them what the IBEW has to offer." ■



# TRANSITIONS

## DECEASED

### John A. Hunter



John A. Hunter, a retired Ninth District international representative whose abundant gifts and goodwill are legendary among his friends and colleagues, died Jan. 5. He was 83.

"I think he's one of the finest men that ever inhabited this earth," retired Martinez, Calif., Local 302 Business Manager Mike Yarbrough said. "He was a strong leader, fair, good to everybody. I can't speak highly enough about John. Everyone loved him."

Other colleagues were just as emphatic, saying how fortunate they were to know Hunter during the 46 years he devoted to the IBEW, starting as a Local 302 apprentice in 1957.

"He was IBEW through and through."

said John O'Rourke, Ninth District international vice president. "He cared deeply about all the members."

Raised in Richmond, Calif., Hunter spent his life in the San Francisco Bay Area. But after graduating as a journeyman wireman, jobs were scarce. Soon, he and "tool buddy" Jack McCann, another newly minted journeyman, hit the road in search of work, landing jobs at a Cold War missile site in Yuba, Calif.

The men and their wives forged lifelong bonds that included many camping and fishing trips as they raised their families. For a half-century, until McCann's death last March, "He and Jack were joined at the hip, the best of friends," O'Rourke said.

Both rose to be business manager of Local 302, starting with McCann. Hunter, his deputy, took the reins in 1979, when McCann began an 18-year run as Ninth District IVP.

Hunter was re-elected business manager twice before joining the international staff in 1987, serving until he retired in 2002. His assignments included San

Francisco Local 6, where he swore in O'Rourke as business manager in 1999.

"He was my mentor and my dear friend," O'Rourke said. "He helped me become the leader I am."

He and others marveled at how deftly Hunter swayed people to his point of view.

"John had a way of coming in and talking to me, a way of getting me to move in a direction I was not prepared to move," O'Rourke said. But it was a nudge, not a shove.

"He'd pose a question that would prompt me to see a perspective I hadn't seen before," he said. "He'd leave my office and I'd wonder, 'How did he get me to do that?'"

Retired Ninth District IVP Mike Mowery said Hunter worked his magic on friends and adversaries alike.

"He was such a decent human being, so kind and considerate with everybody, always a gentleman," he said. But never a pushover.

"John could get people to 'yes' in an arbitration or negotiation, and you'd

shake your heads and say, 'How?' He did it in such a smooth fashion that you didn't even notice," Mowery said.

Ninth District International Representative Dominic Nolan credits Hunter with making his IBEW career possible.

Nolan immigrated to the United States in the 1980s from Ireland, where he'd done a formal apprenticeship with high standards comparable to the IBEW's. But locals then mainly focused on training their own members, he said, and turned him away.

The climate changed under International President J.J. Barry in the late 1980s. "He came out with a dictate to organize," Nolan said. "John Hunter took that seriously. He didn't just give it lip service."

"John would go into the local unions and say, 'What are you doing about organizing, what are the changes you're making, have you allocated staff? Show me your plans,'" he said. "He came in and told everybody to organize, and I'm one of the recipients of that."

Hunter's influence as a representative and McCann's leadership as IVP, along

with both men's popularity, shined a spotlight on their suburban local. Colleagues teasingly called it the "mother local" of the San Francisco based Ninth District.

"Some of the IRs used to give me a hard time about it," said Yarbrough, who followed Hunter as business manager of Local 302. But they knew they were lucky.

"Having John Hunter and Jack McCann is like having Mays and McCovey," he said, invoking the Hall-of-Fame batting duo who put the Giants on the map.

One of Hunter's retirement joys was a standing Monday breakfast at local diner Country Waffles with his yacht club buddies, the club being an old paddleboat at the marina. When he couldn't drive any longer, Yarbrough took him.

"The waitress there called us 'ROMEO' — retired old men eating out," he said. "The Monday before the shelter-in-place order came down in March of last year, we didn't know it then, but that was our last breakfast with John."

An avid fisherman, Hunter loved showing pictures of him posing with a big

# SPOTLIGHT ON SAFETY

## Unions Make Ontario Jobsites Safer, Study Finds

The results of a recently updated study commissioned by the Ontario Construction Secretariat have helped to reaffirm what the IBEW has long known: that a unionized construction jobsite makes for a safer jobsite.

"When our well-trained electrical tradesmen and women work smart and follow the proper safety rules and procedures, they help ensure that every worker on that jobsite gets to go home safe at the end of each working day," said First District International Vice President Tom Reid. "We're pleased to see this report back up our real-world experience, but it should really come as little surprise to the members of our union."

Released in January, the report found that unionized jobsites reported lost-time claims at a rate 31% lower than non-unionized sites, six full percentage points better than the findings of the first study conducted in 2015.

The OCS is a joint labor-management organization that represents more than 100,000 union members and 5,000 union contractors in the province's industrial, commercial and institutional (ICI) construction sector. It commissioned and helped finance the 2015 and 2021 studies by the Institute for Work and Health, which tracks work injury and disability prevention efforts.

"We had no idea what we would find, no preconceived notions," said OCS Chief Executive Officer Robert Bronk of the first study, which looked at the effect of unionization on the incidence of workers' compensation claims from more than 50,000 ICI companies representing 1.7 million organized and non-organized workers alike.

That 2015 report concluded that unionization lowered the likelihood of organizations reporting lost-time injury claims by an impressive 25%, as well as reduced risks through training and the practice of hazard identification and control.

For the newer study, IWH looked at similar figures from Ontario's Workplace Safety and Insurance Board covering 2012 through 2018. The six-point increase found by the 2021 study boosted the original report's findings: that company unionization remains associated with a lower risk of lost-time allowed injury claims.

"Building trades unions insist on a higher level of construction trades training, which results in safer workplace practices, as well as educating tradespeople to recognize unsafe working conditions," said Patrick Dillon, a former business manager of Hamilton, Ontario, Local 105 who is now the head of the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario, in a press release. "This results in a healthier and safer workplace and provides confidence that a unionized workforce will get a job completed on time, on budget and, most importantly, safely." Dillon serves as a labor representative on OCS's board of directors.

The high level of quality training provided by the IBEW and other unions, through apprenticeships, continuing education and on-the-job instruction, is crucial for helping workers stay safe, Reid said. "Preventable accidents harm workers, jobsite morale and a company's bottom line," he said, "to say nothing about how much it can harm the reputation of the unions that represent those workers."

The bigger firms in Ontario tend to be at least partially unionized, the study noted, and unionized building trades workers are more likely to report unsafe working conditions and ensure that workplace safety rules are enforced. Union work sites in the building trades tend also to employ more registered apprentices and have higher journeyman-to-apprentice ratios, it said.

The study didn't drill down to compare the various construction trades, said Bronk, a former training director for the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades. "Anecdotally, though, electrical workers have one of the riskiest jobs, but you remain safe because of training," he said.

The results of the study, Bronk said, show just how much the emphasis that unions like the IBEW place on training pays off. "In the province, unions spend about \$40 million a year on apprenticeships, training and instructors," he said. "They really put their money where their mouth is."

Visit [iciconstruction.com](http://iciconstruction.com) to review the report. ■

## UNIONIZED CONSTRUCTION WORK IS SAFE WORK

BUILDINGS TRADES UNIONS IN ONTARIO'S ICI CONSTRUCTION SECTOR ARE

# 31% SAFER

WHEN COMPARED TO NON-UNION FIRMS

Source: Institute for Work & Health. 2020. Updating a Study of the Union Effect on Safety in the ICI Construction Sector.

### THE UNION EFFECT

Unionization is associated with:



\*In analyses without statistical adjustment in comparison to non-union firms. Statistical adjustments do not significantly alter the Union Safety Effect.

### WHY CHOOSE UNION?

Unionization is associated with:



### ABOUT THE RESEARCH



\*The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) administers a single-payer workers' compensation insurance program for the Province of Ontario.

**IWH** Institute for Work & Health

**OCS** Ontario Construction Secretariat

STUDY CONFIRMS A UNION SAFETY EFFECT EXISTS! TO LEARN MORE, VISIT: [WWW.ICICONSTRUCTION.COM](http://WWW.ICICONSTRUCTION.COM)



## IBEW MEDIA WORLD

In addition to your monthly issue of *The Electrical Worker*, check out the wealth of IBEW-related information online.

### www.ibew.org

Get all the news for and about IBEW members, including web and PDF versions of *The Electrical Worker*, at [IBEW.org](http://IBEW.org).

### YouTube & Vimeo

Help spread word about the value of an IBEW membership by watching selections from our library of videos — from brief clips to longer, in-depth pieces — and then easily sharing them with your brothers and sisters on Facebook, Twitter and more. Get started at [YouTube.com/TheElectricalWorker](https://www.youtube.com/TheElectricalWorker) or [Vimeo.com/IBEW](https://www.vimeo.com/IBEW).

### HourPower

For more than 20 years, New York City Local 3's Amber Light Society has supported women in the electrical trade and has worked hard to bring more members into the Sisterhood. Find out more at [IBEWHourPower.com](http://IBEWHourPower.com).

### ElectricTV

In the American Southwest, where daytime temperatures can sometimes reach triple digits, quickly getting power restored to residential and commercial customers can be crucial. Check out [ElectricTV.net](http://ElectricTV.net) to find out how the service work technicians of Albuquerque, N.M., Local 611 handle emergency service calls.

catch, often admitting with pride that it was his wife, Carol, who reeled it in.

They were married 62 years. "You'd see them together and say, 'that's what a happily married couple looks like,'" O'Rourke said, noting how Hunter relentlessly urged friends to plan weekly date nights with their wives.

In addition to Carol, Hunter is survived by their three sons John, Mike and Steve, two sisters, eleven grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. In a colorful newspaper obituary, his family honored his love for the IBEW, his passion for helping people, including volunteering for his area's Community Emergency Response Team, and his "unique ability to turn any situation into a positive for all involved."

On behalf of all officers, members and staff, the IBEW extends its sincere condolences to Brother Hunter's family and friends, with immense gratitude for his decades of contributions. ■

#### DECEASED

### John P. Widener Jr.



Retired International Representative John Widener died on Nov. 21, six days after his 89th birthday.

Widener was born in Johnson City, Tenn. When he was 10, his father moved the family to Washington, D.C.

After graduating from Woodrow Wilson High School in 1951, Widener joined the Naval Air Reserve Training Unit, where he took classes on electricity and electronics. His interests eventually led him to the IBEW, where he was initiated into Washington Local 26 in 1954. But he wasn't quite finished with his military service.

"President Kennedy activated his unit during the Cuban Missile Crisis," said Widener's wife, JoAnn; he served on active duty with the Navy as an anti-submarine air crew member from 1961 to 1962.

When Widener returned to full-time civilian life, "He used to work at a lot of different hospitals in the Washington area," JoAnn Widener recalled, including Prince George's Hospital in Bladensburg, Md.

Widener also started to become active with Local 26 and with the labor movement in the greater Washington area, putting together an impressive résumé over the length of his union career. He served on a number of Local 26 committees: safety, organizing, labor/management, political education (COPE), negotiating, pension, health/welfare, plus joint apprenticeship and training. He also was an instructor at the local's Joint Apprenticeship Training Center from 1971 to 1975, and then its director from 1975 to 1985.

"He was a hard worker," JoAnn Widener said. "I supported him in everything he wanted to do. He was very serious and dignified."

Outside of the IBEW, Widener served on the executive committee for the Washington Building Trades and as vice president

of the Maryland/D.C. Construction Trades Council. He also was active with the Virginia State AFL-CIO Building Trades Council and served as a delegate to the IBEW's 1986 and 1991 international conventions.

His labor activism didn't stop at the end of the workday. Widener volunteered for IBEW-supported charities, including the Leukemia and Lymphoma Foundation, Dollars Against Diabetes, Christmas in April and the U.S. Marine Corps' Toys for Tots program.

In 1989, he was elected Washington Building Trades Man of the Year. That same year, he was elected to serve as Local 26's business manager, a position he held for three years — until then-International President J.J. Barry appointed him to serve as an international representative with the Construction Department.

At the International Office, Widener was assigned to work primarily on committees relating to electrical codes and standards. He served as a member of the correlating committee for the National Electrical Code, as chairman of the National Fire Protection Association's committee on industrial machinery electrical equipment standards, and as a member of the NFPA's committee on electrical safety requirements for employer workplaces.

Widener also worked on the standards review committees for Underwriter Laboratories and for the National Electrical Manufacturers Association/American National Standards Institute.

Not one to sit still in his spare time, Widener was a member of Anacostia Lodge No. 21 of the Free and Accepted Masons, Almas Shriners, Scottish Rite of

Freemasonry, and Order of the Eastern Star. He also helped out with Local 26's retired members' club.

"He was a churchgoing man, too," said JoAnn Widener, noting that her husband had served as head usher of his local United Methodist church. "We met in church, in fact," she added. The couple married in 1966.

Widener retired in 1998 and moved to Fort Valley, Va., in 2003. There, he enjoyed gardening and serving as an active member of Otterbein United Methodist Church.

"He loved our country place," JoAnn Widener said. "He did a lot of the building himself."

On behalf of our entire membership, the officers and staff send our condolences to JoAnn and the rest of Brother Widener's family. ■

## CIRCUITS

### TVA Ambassador Program Takes Code of Excellence to the Next Level

When you're the nation's largest government-owned power provider, it's important to have all your employees, spread across some 80,000 miles and 60 worksites, on the same page. For the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Code of Excellence has been a vital part of its recipe for success, and a key ingredient of that has been the ambassador program.

"The impetus for the ambassador program is really about relationships," said International Representative Curtis Sharpe. "It's about developing a structure where you have craft, management, and HR ambassadors working together to fix and minimize conflict, drive job security, and increase success and growth for employees and the TVA."

Those relationships are part of the Code's core values: safety, professionalism, accountability, relationships and quality, or SPARQ. Taken together, they embody the best of what the IBEW does, as well as the other trades at TVA that also participate in the program. Those trades include the Machinists, Plumbers and Pipefitters, Operating Engineers, Boilermakers and Teamsters.

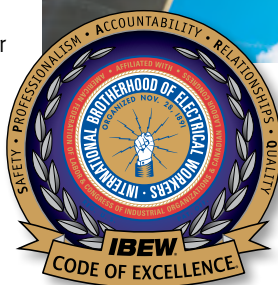
The ambassador role was developed to recognize those in the workplace, both craft and management, who have the respect of their coworkers and can resolve conflict at the line level.

They serve as the face of the Code and partner with stewards and peers to mitigate conflict and serve as a conduit to introduce new tools, processes and other items brought to them by the members.

"It is a bottom-up design that's supported from the top," said TVA employee and Nashville, Tenn., Local 429 member Chad Southall. "It's about getting frontline craft and management to work through



*TVA's ambassador program recognizes employees from both management and the crafts who embody the Code of Excellence and lead by example.*



issues with good old common sense in a lot of cases."

The TVA, which currently employs about 2,650 IBEW members, has a long history of working with labor. But no organization is immune to conflict. Prior to the Code's implementation in 2018, there had been a slide in trust and relationships. Grievances were piling up. Something needed to change. That's when Tenth District International Vice President Brent Hall suggested they look at the success of another utility, Florida Power and Light, in bringing in the Code to improve working conditions. It didn't happen overnight, but once the program was adopted, things at TVA started to improve. Now, grievances are down over 500% since embracing the Code. And that has led to stronger relationships that benefit everyone.

"Our craft ambassadors are valued and respected in the workplace and this keeps us at the table when addressing issues across the TVA fleet," said Southall, who is a lead ambassador.

The TVA is also coming off one of its best years in safety and performance in its 80-plus year history, Sharpe said. That's no small feat considering the coronavirus pandemic.

"We partner together and learn from mistakes and challenges instead of going to our corners preparing to fight," Southall said. "Relationships and trust grow organically when you have a common goal."

Ambassadors are taking leadership roles in developing and implementing the COVID-19 protocols that allow this essential workforce to provide power to the Valley's more than 10 million residents. They're on bi-weekly calls with senior leadership, getting answers to members' questions, and are helping to establish pre-screenings and checkpoints. And they're always on the lookout for ways to improve.

"We've partnered together during COVID and consequently protected each other and produced one of the best years ever," Sharpe said. "The leadership and trust between all parties has only grown, and the Code of Excellence is directly responsible for that." ■



LOCAL LINES

Donations Help Feed Community's Hungry

L.U. 1 (as,c,ees,ei,em,es,et,fm,i,mt,rts,s,se,spa,st&ws), ST. LOUIS, MO — Ozark Food Pantry President Carmelita Davidson describes 2020 as “our most challenging year ever, but also the most inspiring in terms of community generosity.” The COVID-19 pandemic, with every surge, has left more people jobless and increased demand for Ozark Food Pantry services. Adding to these challenges were electrical issues at the food pantry in Festus, MO. Thanks to a donation from the Electrical Connection, a partnership of IBEW Local 1 and the St. Louis chapter of NECA, the electrical problems have been resolved.

The electrical problems, typical of organizations operating on a shoestring budget in an aging facility, included faulty wiring and issues with circuit breakers tripping in a facility that needs to power 14 freezers, three refrigerators and a walk-in cooler. Over the years, piecemeal repairs were made by those unskilled and unfamiliar with building codes. Gary Bourd, who works at the food pantry, brought the issues to the attention of the Electrical Connection and IBEW Business Representative Chuck DeMoulin. He notified Business Manager Frank Jacobs, who collaborated with St. Louis NECA Executive Vice President Doug Martin on a plan to donate Electrical Connection-member services to upgrade the electrical systems.

On Dec. 10, 2020, IBEW-signatory contractor Pioneer Electric made the repairs. It also donated and installed light fixtures and laid the groundwork for the addition of a backup generator that the Ozark Food Pantry hopes to have in 2021.

Since the pandemic began roiling the economy back in March, demand at the Ozark Food Pantry has shot up 30%. It served more than 100 families a week and more than 1,000 families in 2020. To donate food or money to the Ozark Food Pantry, call 636-933-9974 or visit its website at [www.ozarkfoodpantry.com](http://www.ozarkfoodpantry.com).

Jan Bresnan, P.S.



IBEW Local 1's Nick Stanley installs a fluorescent light at Ozark Food Pantry.

New Leadership, New Projects in 2021

L.U. 11 (i,rts&spa), LOS ANGELES, CA — In March 2020 California Governor Gavin Newsom issued the nation's first statewide shelter-in-place executive order. With guidance from Business Manager Joel Barton, Governor Newsom deemed our inside wiremen and sound & communication installers “essential skilled workers.” We immediately ordered thousands of official Local 11 face coverings, showing off our championship Dodgers, Lakers, Kings, Clippers, Rams and Chargers. Our masked members completed work on Sofi Stadium and the largest, 360-foot, double-sided television screen in the world. We have continued upgrades to LAX with the Terminal Modernization Project and construction of the Automated People Mover, an electric train system on a 2.25-mile elevated track system, scheduled for completion in 2023.

2020 saw the solidification of the relationship between Local 11 and the Engineers & Architects Association, representing over 1,900 brothers and sisters in the city of Los Angeles. Add that to the 9,000-plus members of Local 11 who produced over 10-million man-hours and saw a membership growth rate of over 4%, earning our Organizing Department the Henry Miller Award for organizing and gaining a net “A” membership growth. We also organized 16 new contractors this year, all during a pandemic. Zoom, of course, has become the word of the day, with training and pre-job conferences done online throughout our organization.

To date we have completed over 20 solar field projects, employing thousands of electricians and generating over 1.2 gigawatts of power. We look forward to the new year, new pro-labor leadership with Joe Biden and Kamala Harris and many new projects across the board.

Chuck Webb, R.S.

Crawford Leaves Legacy of IBEW Service

L.U. 43 (em,i&rts), SYRACUSE, NY — Local 43 President Kevin Crawford retired after 36 years at the end of December 2020. We will miss him, his dedication and devotion to our local union and the labor movement.

Some may not know this but, President Crawford has served Local 43 not only as president, but also as vice president; Executive Board member; trustee of pension, annuity and health plans; and trustee of Central New York Joint Apprenticeship and Training Fund.

From the beginning, he has been a pillar to our staff and an asset to our local union. He has been instrumental in shaping the values of our great organization.



Kevin Crawford celebrated retirement after 36 years of dedicated service to Local 43.

He has always brought the best out in others; we are grateful to him for helping us find our true potential. As he enters retirement, know that he has left behind a great track of achievement, teamwork and an outstanding work ethic that will always be part of our local union.

We thank him for all he has contributed to our organization. It has been a blessing working with him. We want to wish him a wonderful retirement filled with health and happiness. Brother Crawford plans to go hunting and fishing more, as well as enjoying more time with his family and grandchildren.

Best wishes on his retirement!

Alan Marzullo, B.M.

Local Secures PLAs, Continues Negotiations

L.U. 47 (lctt,mo,o,u&uow), DIAMOND BAR, CA — Our sentiments go out to anyone who has suffered or had loved ones suffer from COVID-19, and our condolences to those who have lost family to this terrible pandemic. All Local 47 events have been canceled until further notice due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Local 47 and the Building Trades of San Diego and Imperial counties crafted and secured two project labor agreements with Imperial Irrigation District. The first was for Local 47 Outside Construction, and the second was for the Building Trades.

Negotiations continue with Anaheim General Group. The city has not made any effort to meet on Banning Electric utility and general units; we have given them notice to schedule bargaining going forward. We are waiting to hear back from the city after we

rejected their last offer on Colton Electric. We have reached a 5-year agreement with Bear Valley Electric: Wages only — 2.5% in 2021, 2.5% in 2022, 3.5% in 2023, 3.25% in 2024 and 3% in 2025.

We're sad to report the deaths of members Nicholas Buscemi, James Dewey, Martin Little, Billy Owens, Luis Perez and Josh Searce. Our condolences and prayers are with their loved ones.

Work safe and buy union!

Mitch Smith, P.S.



Senior A.B.M. Colin Lavin presented Brother Terry Smith with his 35 years of service pin during the fires at Shaver Lake.

In Challenging Times, Members Step Up

L.U. 51 (catv,lctt,o,ptc,rtb,t,u&uow), SPRINGFIELD, IL — With 2020 a difficult year for so many, we have been contacted by nonunion workers who want a voice on the job. We are working with the city of Princeton to get a first contract with the public works employees. At the time of this writing, we are setting up meeting dates with Invenergy to negotiate a first contract for the employees at Grand Ridge Wind Energy Center. Bargaining is ongoing for many of our contracts. The pandemic has created new logistical issues that we have to learn to adapt to. The financial impact of the pandemic is also creating hurdles in some of these negotiations.

Important energy legislation that is critical to both our membership and our employers continues to be slow tracked, mainly due to the ongoing pandemic. The local, along with the IBEW Illinois State Conference, has continued to push for our concerns to be heard and addressed. Hopefully, by the time you are reading this,

Submitting Local Lines Articles

Local Lines are printed monthly on an alternating even/odd schedule. They can be submitted by designated press secretaries or union officers via email ([locallines@ibew.org](mailto:locallines@ibew.org)) or U.S. Mail. We have a 200-word limit. We make every effort to assist local unions in publishing useful and relevant local union news; however, all final content decisions are based on the editor's judgment. Our guidelines and deadlines are available at [www.ibew.org/media-center/IBEW-News-Media-Center/Submitting-Local-Lines](http://www.ibew.org/media-center/IBEW-News-Media-Center/Submitting-Local-Lines). Please email or call the Media Department at (202) 728-6291 with any questions.

Trade Classifications			
(as) Alarm & Signal	(et) Electronic Technicians	(mps) Motion Picture Studios	(rts) Radio-Television Service
(ars) Atomic Research Service	(fm) Fixture Manufacturing	(nst) Nuclear Service Technicians	(so) Service Occupations
(bo) Bridge Operators	(govt) Government	(o) Outside	(s) Shopmen
(cs) Cable Splicers	(i) Inside	(p) Powerhouse	(se) Sign Erector
(catv) Cable Television	(it) Instrument Technicians	(pet) Professional, Engineers & Technicians	(spa) Sound & Public Address
(c) Communications	(lctt) Line Clearance Tree Trimming	(ptc) Professional, Technical & Clerical	(st) Sound Technicians
(cr) Cranemen	(lpt) Lightning Protection Technicians		(t) Telephone
(ees) Electrical Equipment Service	(mt) Maintenance	(rr) Railroad	(tm) Transportation Manufacturing
(ei) Electrical Inspection	(mo) Maintenance & Operation	(rtb) Radio-Television Broadcasting	(u) Utility
(em) Electrical Manufacturing	(mow) Manufacturing Office Workers	(rtm) Radio-Television Manufacturing	(uow) Utility Office Workers
(es) Electric Signs	(mar) Marine		(ws) Warehouse and Supply

Efforts are made to make this list as inclusive as possible, but the various job categories of IBEW members are too numerous to comprehensively list all.



we will have more developments to report on.

Line-clearance tree trimming is at full employment and work should be steady all winter.

This past year has been as difficult as any in recent memory. However, we are extremely proud of the way our membership has stepped up. 2020 further defined the essential work that our membership provides. Your representation of Local 51 and the IBEW have not gone unnoticed. Be safe.

*Karlene Knisley, B.R.*

## Ongoing Work & Completed Projects

L.U. 55 (c,lctt,o&u), DES MOINES, IA — I am writing this on Jan. 2 to be published in March. We have a new president now, and we should be seeing some changes coming down the line for us. Let's get behind him and help to make our country be the best it can be.

The picture (below) is of a crew from L.E. Myers who worked on a 3-phase lot line on the east side of Ankeny, Iowa; the pole was the end of the project. It gave two apprentices a great opportunity for some valuable hot time. I stayed and visited for a while and found them to be very qualified and doing a great job. It's guys like this that make our local stand out.

Local 55 has been very blessed for quite a few years with the work load we have had. We continue to keep a lot of travelers working, and we need more yet. This spring should be a very busy one for us. Remember to always look out for your pole buddy and to offer help to anyone who needs it. Work safely and never put your hands where you can't see them! Make sure to get your COVID-19 shot when it's your turn!

I'm going ice fishing! See you in a couple months!

*Myron Green, P.S.*



*A crew from L.E. Myers in Marshalltown, Iowa: (Left to right) Jarod Beede, Tyler Mckinnon and Drew Stewart.*

## One-of-a-Kind Solar, Storage and Training Project

L.U. 77 (lctt,mt,o,t&u), SEATTLE, WA — The Horn Rapids Solar, Storage and Training Project in Richland, Wash. is now powered up. This project is the first utility-scale solar and battery project in the state of Washington. The project is a joint venture on land owned by Local 77 that is being leased to Tucci Energy Services. Energy Northwest generates the solar electricity, utilizing the city of Richland's energy distribution system. The project consists of a 4MW, 20-acre solar gen-

erating array of 11,458 photovoltaic panels and is coupled with a 1MW/4MWhr battery energy storage system. Today, this project generates enough clean energy to power about 600 homes.

There is also a training center on the property, adjacent to the project. This facility will provide a program for training solar and battery storage technicians. Training will include plant construction, operations and maintenance, as well as safety and hazard prevention. This training facility will be run by Potelco, Inc., a signatory contractor of Local 77. The training center is expected to positively impact the local economy, as trainees will come from across the country to learn at the facility.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony took place on November 10 to celebrate completion of the first phase.

*Charlie Reyes, Exec. Board*

## Awards and Transitions

L.U. 97 (u), SYRACUSE, NY — Congratulations to retired Business Representative Kern Yerdon for being named Oswego County, N.Y., Veteran of the Year. Kern is an Army veteran of the Vietnam War who began his career in labor following his active-duty service, first with Laborers before joining Local 97's predecessor, Local 2032. From his early service to the local as a steward, rising through the ranks as a unit chairman, later to president of Local 2032 and finally as business representative for Local 97, Kern was a staunch labor advocate in service to the members. He continues with service to his community, recently beginning his 26th year serving on the Richland, N.Y., Town Board. Well done, Kern!

We also congratulate Kevin Lyons on his recent retirement. Over his career, Kevin has served as a steward, chief steward and, for the last 10 years, a business representative in our Albany office. Over his 39-year career, he has earned immeasurable respect from both sides of the table for his passionate advocacy for the safety and fair treatment of our members. You will be sorely missed, Kev.

Congratulations also to Duane Beach, who has moved on following 30 years with Local 97. He has been a steward, chief steward and safety advocate. He is not hanging up his hooks just yet, though: He will be taking on a new role as a safety specialist with an IBEW signatory contractor. Best wishes in your new endeavor.

*Dan Machold, P.S./B.R.*

## Our Part in the COVID-19 Vaccine

L.U. 103 (cs&i), BOSTON, MA — As COVID-19 rages on and continues to cause setbacks in every aspect of our lives, we have good reason to be optimistic as we move through 2021. Millions of doses of vaccines have been rolled out from drug manufacturers Moderna and Pfizer. Both are Cambridge, Mass.-based pharmaceutical companies that provide Local 103 contractors and members with many man-hours per year. The lab/bio/pharmaceutical market in Boston and Cambridge has been very strong prior to and throughout the entire COVID-19 pandemic, and we are very grateful for that sector of the construction industry. It gives us a great sense of pride to know that we are working on cutting-edge research, development, cures and

vaccines that will be used around the world.

The Local 103 health plan, through our prescription provider CVS Caremark, has rolled out a COVID-19 testing site at Local 103 to provide rapid tests for the health and convenience of our members and their families. Stay safe, brothers and sisters; better days are ahead.

*Jimmy Fleming, P.S.*

## Providing Member Services at the Highest Levels

L.U. 125 (lctt,o,t&u), PORTLAND, OR — We made it! 2021 is finally here. Thank you for your continued focus, professionalism and support as the IBEW and our country navigated through the coronavirus pandemic. It's certainly not over, but we learned a lot about ourselves in 2020. Our staff worked hard to continue providing member services at the highest levels during these challenging times. Thank you.

Many of us look forward to a calendar full of IBEW events — Casino night, linemen rodeos, golf tournaments and other fundraisers. Unfortunately, this year we know that multiple events simply won't happen due to the uncertainty from COVID-19. While we may be unable to gather at our traditional events, we are looking at how to reconnect with our membership in other ways.

Our staff is already engaged in or preparing for negotiations with numerous utilities. If your contract is set to expire, stay informed. Participate in the pre-bargaining activities. Share your opinions, and most certainly, don't forget to vote on the actual contract.

In this new year, let's not forget our top priority — our members' safety. No matter what is going on, that does not change. It's a new year, but our priority hasn't changed. Stay safe!

*Marcy Grail, A.B.M.*

## Focusing on Quality of Life, Building Greater Solidarity

L.U. 159 (i), MADISON, WI — The pandemic has presented us with many opportunities to be flexible and resilient. Our instructors rose to the challenge and were able to teach a number of classes online. In addition, this fall we hosted two sections of a socially distanced union contractor class with Matt Kolbinsky of PRO UNION Consulting. We also held the local's first Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Training Program (EVITP) class and have another one planned for 2021.

Our Holiday Fantasy in Lights display was well attended, with 12,000-14,000 vehicles rolling through each week. Thank you to our hard-working members and staff, and the contractors who partnered with us, for making 2021 a record-breaking year.

This year we will focus on ways to improve members' quality of life and to build greater solidarity.

Here are some of the initiatives we have planned: We will implement a formal mentoring program; present Code of Excellence trainings; and offer seminars to help members better understand our CBAs, bylaws and the IBEW Constitution. We will also rev up the new craft certification booth and increase efforts to help members improve their skills. Additionally, we look forward to welcoming two new contractors during the first quarter of 2021.

*Sue Blue, B.M.*



*Organizer/Business Agent Damon Glenn holds down the booth for EWMC 159 at Holiday Fantasy in Lights.*

## Celebrating Christmas with a Drive-Thru for Santa

L.U. 177 (bo,ees,govt,i,mo,o&pet), JACKSONVILLE, FL — The year 2020 is now in the rear-view mirror, and it will be one that none of us will ever forget. We look forward to the upcoming year and hopefully a return to normalcy. Work in our area will be picking up in the first half of 2021, with several hospital jobs and the drydock rework job at Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base.

We recently held our children's Christmas party, COVID-style. Santa and everyone were playing it safe that day. We had a drive-thru for Santa to minimize exposure for everyone. Brother Carlos Nunez did a great job as Santa, again, COVID-style this year. President David Bryant, along with his volunteers and elves, did a great job adapting our children's Christmas party this year in order to keep everyone safe.

We look forward to Christmas 2021, hopefully without social distancing. We would like to thank all the locals that have been able to work our traveling brothers and sisters this past year and are anxiously looking forward to a prosperous year for our brothers and sisters.

*Alan Jones, B.M./F.S.*



*Brother Carlos Nunez (aka Santa) handing out gifts in a drive-thru for Santa.*



## LOCAL LINES

## Spring on the Horizon

L.U. 245 (govt,lctt,o,rtb&u), TOLEDO, OH — As of this writing, we continue to deal with COVID-19 and its restrictions. We had to cancel the December and January union meetings, and no decision had been made about the February meeting at the time of this submission. The Executive Board continues to meet via Zoom, a technology hardly known a year ago that has become the norm for most locals' business.

Negotiations with Energy Harbor (Davis-Besse) and Hancock-Wood are ongoing. A tentative agreement has been reached with Lake Township with ratification to take place in early 2021.

Things are pretty quiet, however. During a turbulent fall, Walleye Power saw many employees quarantined at various times due to COVID-19.

Work on the outside is slow at this time but is expected to pick up after the first of the year. Local 245 sadly reports a fatality on our property with the death of a traveler from Nashville, Tenn., Local 429 working for New River Electrical. Details of the accident are not available at this time. Our condolences go out to our brother's family.

Toledo Edison linemen can't catch a break: After several calls for mutual assistance this fall, the winter storm calls started, with the latest being over Christmas in New Jersey.

Local 245 members across all crafts continue to work safely despite the many challenges and distractions.

Until next time, stay safe and warm. Spring is on the horizon.

Ray Zychowicz, P.S.

## Celebrating Christmas Safely

IBEW Local 269 (i&o), Trenton, NJ — A normal holiday season would have found Santa sitting in the main meeting hall listening attentively to the Christmas wishes of the children and grandchildren of local brothers and sisters. But the COVID-19 pandemic has affected almost every aspect of everyday life, and the holidays were certainly no exception. So, if the kids couldn't come inside to meet Santa, then he would just have to set up shop outside. He promptly seated himself outside the front door of the union hall and met his admirers at curbside, thus keeping everyone happy and, above all, safe.

But Santa wasn't done yet. He secured his throne in the back of the Local 269 pickup truck and proceeded from neighborhood to neighborhood of the local's territory, dispensing presents and Christmas cheer right at the members' doorsteps. To say



Santa delivers holiday cheer to the doorsteps of Local 269 members.

that Santa and his many helpers (and you know who you are) went above and beyond would be an understatement, indeed! To see such effort and enthusiasm displayed by all involved truly makes one proud to be part of an organization that cares so deeply for the welfare of its members.

Brian Jacoppo, P.S.

## Members Vote to Support Their Union

L.U. 291 (c,i,mo,o,rtb&rts), BOISE, ID — The new year finds our local healthy and prosperous, with most members employed locally and a few on the road working in other locals.

I'm glad to report that an attempt to decrease our working assessments to include only paying assessments on straight time, and not overtime, was soundly defeated in a recent vote by a majority of the membership present. Members realize that defunding the local union hall will lead to disastrous results when trying to organize and defend the rights and responsibilities that keep the union strong, vibrant and progressive.

There is a small contingent of members that have started a labor outreach at the Idaho State Capitol once a month, where the benefits of union training and membership can be shared with the community; successful efforts have been realized so far.

In closing, I would like to commend our elected representatives, officers and office staff for a job well done last year. Remember, without "U" and "I" there is no union!

Mark Zaleski, B.M.

## Local Persists on Contract with Co-op

L.U. 309 (i,lctt,mo,mt,o,rts,spa&u), COLLINSVILLE, IL — In what should have been a quick and easy first contract, the clerks at Clinton County Electric Cooperative have become the targets of an anti-union lawyer hired by the board. After eight contentious meetings, the nine-member, all-male board has offered zero raises for four years and no contract. Local 309 received favorable initial decisions on two unfair labor practice charges, and now it's up to the board to agree to the terms or take it to court. While this process continues, Business Manager Tim Evans is urging members who get their power from Clinton County Co-op to "contact your board and consider running for the board."

2020 saw the cancellation of our annual retiree dinner. This popular event brings members together to reflect upon and celebrate the contributions of our retirees. It is always a wonderful time, and we hope to resume this great tradition in 2021.

In addition to many others, Local 309 would like to recognize 73-year honorees Robert C. Bingman, Raymond P. Mullins and Richard P. Voss; and 76-year honoree Billy N. Lewis.

Carlos S. Perez, R.S.

## Local Stays Busy During Pandemic

L.U. 317 (i,lctt,o,rts,t&u), HUNTINGTON, WV — Our local had a good year in 2020. We were fortunate enough to keep our members, as well as travelers, busy with work throughout the pandemic. The work forecast for Inside Construction looks slow for the first quarter, but we are hopeful that work will pick back up in the spring. Our Outside Construction branch has been very busy and appears to look promising in 2021.

We would also like to thank Big Brothers Big Sisters; WTCR-FM radio; IBEW LMCC; and our active members, retirees and contractors for their efforts to make

the toy drive a success once again. This benefited 200 local children in the tri-state area. Santa and Mrs. Claus, along with those volunteers, showed up to ensure success of this special event despite the rain. Special appreciation to Maggie Bailey, Skip Bailey, Tom Braley, Betty Ann Fannin, Clay Mitchell, Lisa Mitchell, Lance Moore, Michael Prario, Dale Simmons, Matt Simms, Kevin Wells, Glenna Wolfe, Sam Wolfe and Shane Wolfe.

Shane Wolfe, A.B.M.



Despite the rain, volunteers showed up to ensure the success of Local 317's toy drive.

## Facing Reality

L.U. 343 (i,spa&st), LE SUEUR, MN — Happy St. Patrick's Day, brothers and sisters. It was March 17, 2020, when Minnesota bars and restaurants were first ordered by the governor to shut down. I remember, after signing 242's book, we had lunch and the restaurant closed at 5 p.m. COVID-19 has become the new reality. Local 343 Training Director Mike Bambrick Jr. has faced this reality and created a new journeyman wireman training format. Online code update classes are offered monthly throughout the year. The response to the online classes is overwhelmingly positive. This may be the new normal, although the doughnuts will be missed.

In-person classes are tentatively scheduled three times this year in both Rochester and Mankato. No classes are possible without instructors. We thank Dan Goodew, Cari Helberg, Scott Higgins, Dave Hyrkas and Mark Sparks for their continued commitment to the local.

Local 343 respectfully acknowledges the passing of the following members in 2020: Wayne Abraham, Norman Barrer, Merrill Bjerkeset, Eugene Dessen, Leon Flynn, Henry Ganz, Steve Hamilton, Michael Jochim, Michael Johnson, Scott Laughter, Orval Marquardt, Daniel Murphy, Francis Neubert, Darrell Peterson and Earl Wheeler.

A wise man once said, "I don't have enough money to buy junk." Buy "Made in USA."

Tom Small, P.S.

## Adapting to COVID-19 in Training and Seasonal Activities

L.U. 347 (em,i,mt,rtb,rts&spa), DES MOINES, IA — Just as the entire world has had to adapt to the new realities of COVID-19, we have had to adjust as well. Despite the obvious — masking up any time we enter any building or facility — other changes have been necessary. Three general membership meetings had to be canceled in 2020. Our JATC has been working toward implementing virtual training for both journeyman wireman and apprentice classes. A fifth instructor was recently hired, and the committee elected to allow 70 apprentices to start the first-year program. There have been and will continue to be many hiccups along the way. We'll have nothing if we can't support our brothers and sisters with patience, cooperation and consideration.

The local has also pursued the traditional seasonal activities. Unfortunately, the Christmas party for members' children and grandchildren had to be canceled; but as a consolation, gifts were distributed to many of the member's children. Local 347's participation with Toys

for Tots was a rip-roaring success. The membership also erected a bigger and better Christmas lights display at Adventureland for the Make-A-Wish Foundation. Attendance was up 20% in 2020. This is how we show our local's commitment to our community and to those in critical need.

Work referrals continue to be made at the hall. Work for the foreseeable future looks strong.

At this time, the general membership meeting is to be held per the regular schedule. Watch for a groundbreaking for the new hall in early spring.

Obviously, there are a lot of questions going forward. There are still a lot of bugs that need to be worked out, too many to list. However, there has never been a better opportunity to show the world what brotherhood strong looks like. Local 347 will get through this, and we will be better for the experience.

Mike Schweiger, P.S.

## Building IBEW Presence in Orange County

L.U. 441 (as,i&rts), SANTA ANA, CA — On Dec. 4, local staff and members set up a picket targeting AJ Kirkwood for area standards in Costa Mesa, Calif. A long-time offender when it comes to jobsite safety and working conditions, AJ Kirkwood's disregard for the values we pride ourselves on has become impossible to ignore. As we proceed with 2021, we look forward to further building the IBEW presence in Orange County as a model for jobsite fairness and craft excellence.

Neal H. Lauzon, B.M.



Local 441 set up a picket targeting AJ Kirkwood for area standards in Costa Mesa, CA.



## Bettering the Brotherhood, Supporting Those in Need

L.U. 481 (ees,em,i,mt,rts,s&spa), INDIANAPOLIS, IN — Brothers and sisters, we hope you all had a great holiday season and a great start to the new year. Let's hope that 2021 has many great things in store for the IBEW and that we can all continue to better the brotherhood and look out for one another.

To close out 2020, the members of Local 481, along with our NECA partners, held a food drive at the union hall with proceeds going to a local food bank. To say that our members did a good job would be an understatement! With all the donations from members, contractors and business partners around the jurisdiction, we were able to donate over 20,000 pounds of food to the shelter. That will go a long way to help support the community! The shelter was overwhelmed by the abundance of donations. Business Manager Jeff Wheeler was proud of how well the membership came together to support those in need. Way to go, members of 481! Keep up the good work!

Blake Andrews, Treas.



Business Manager Jeff Wheeler with donations from one of our jobsites.

## Welcome, 2021

L.U. 557 (i,mt,rts&spa), SAGINAW, MI — At this writing, we are turning the page on the year that was 2020. It was no doubt a year we will all remember for quite

some time. We welcome the promise of returning to a more normal life. Here at Local 557, we look forward to returning to monthly membership meetings as scheduled. The cancellation of this year's annual Christmas meeting was disappointing, but hopefully we can find another time soon to gather and celebrate the membership's hard-earned IBEW service pins.

To start 2020, Local 557 welcomed one of its own as a new Michigan initiative organizer. James Lamb now has a year under his belt in this position and has done a remarkable job in his first year organizing throughout the state. Additionally, our local was happy to bring aboard four new journeymen inside wiremen. With our small membership, these new journeymen coming aboard in one year is a great organizing achievement. Congratulations to Brothers Dillon Brousseau, Joseph Hansas, Justin Hemgesberg and Jason Teed on your new careers in the IBEW.

Evan Allardycy, B.M./F.S.

## Local Gives Back, Lights Up the Holidays

L.U. 569 (i,mar,mt,rts&spa), SAN DIEGO, CA — Our local re-configured our annual holiday parties to become drive-thru winter wonderland experiences. Our members loaded up their families (dogs, too), and brought them to celebrate the holidays with Local 569 in both San Diego and Imperial counties. There were lots of lights, gifts for kids and a special appearance from Santa. Check out the photos posted on our website: [www.ibew569.org](http://www.ibew569.org).

Many thanks to our Electrical Workers Minority Caucus (EWMC) members for installing holiday lights on three bridges in the San Diego Southeastern Diamond Business District.

Local 569 also lent a hand to the San Diego & Imperial Counties Labor Council Food & Toy Drive distributions, helping hundreds of local families and children with gifts, holiday meals and cheer.

2021 will be very busy for us, from contract negotiations, to securing more project labor agreements, to growing our membership. We'll keep our focus on



Local 569 EWMC members light up the holidays.

strengthening our pipeline of work, fighting for higher wages and a good contract for you and protecting your rights on the job.

We're heading into 2021 as a stronger union, thanks to YOU and your hard work! Together, we will continue to make a difference and build stronger communities.

Gretchen Newsom, Political Dir.

## JATC Instructor Bill (Two Cows) Thompson Retires

L.U. 611 (catv,es,govt,i,lctt,o,spa,t&u), ALBUQUERQUE, NM — After several years of teaching at the JATC, Bill (Two Cows) Thompson has decided to retire. Bill, a well-liked instructor for many years, decided last year to call it quits and moved to Arkansas. We wish Bill a long and happy retirement.

Work has been steady recently, with several calls out to Facebook and Sandia Labs and more work is expected to be released soon.

We haven't had a meeting in several months, and in December and January, the hall was open by appointment only. Hopefully we can get through this pandemic in the near future. This is an election year, so if anyone has any suggestions for re-write, please get them to the hall as soon as possible.

On behalf of the local, I would like to send condolences to the family and friends of members that have recently passed away: Rico Mendonca, Ed Mros, Harvey Scholes and Richard Thompson.

Everyone, please stay safe and healthy.

Darrell J. Blair, P.S.

## Springtime Renewal

L.U. 617 (c,i,mo&st), SAN MATEO, CA — Springtime is upon us: A time for rebirth and to count our blessings and be grateful. We have persevered despite the devastating impact of the pandemic. There have been many changes and inconveniences; but nevertheless, we have been resilient.

With new a leader, Joe "I am a union man" Biden, IBEW members look forward to seeing more worker-friendly policies. Many thanks to our registrar, Steven Booker, and all those who phone banked for local and national candidates. And to our staff, members and all essential workers who have been working hard to follow guidelines that

change daily, we salute you. We have supported one another and must continue to do so.

Not having in-person union meetings, fall and Christmas celebrations, Local 617 picnic, veterans' breakfast, club meetings, pin party and most social activities has been difficult for many. As nice as virtual meetings may be, they just don't compare!

The IBEW-NECA wellness program continues to expand with the Holiday Hold 'em Challenge and tips on diet and exercise. Members received a cash prize for not putting on the pounds over the holidays. Thanks to BaySports for keeping us

informed and healthy.

Let us all commit to rebuild our communities and nation, stronger and with equality for all. Please stay safe.

Kenn Perfit, P.S.

## 2021: Our Time to Shine!

L.U. 627 (u), FORT PIERCE, FL — Greetings, brothers and sisters, and Happy New Year to all! 2020 was quite the challenging year for us as a nation, a union and a local. However, with all that behind us now, 2021 is working up to be a very exciting and productive year.

Our local has requested Job Steward & Officer training from the International. This training will strengthen the skills and knowledge for our elected and appointed officials. We have also requested a chapter of the IBEW RENEW program, which is about getting our younger members to be more active and involved. Our 25th Annual Ironman Fundraising Golf Tournament is to be held in June this year, and we have several other events planned. As a local, we are working on several other projects to improve communications and member development.

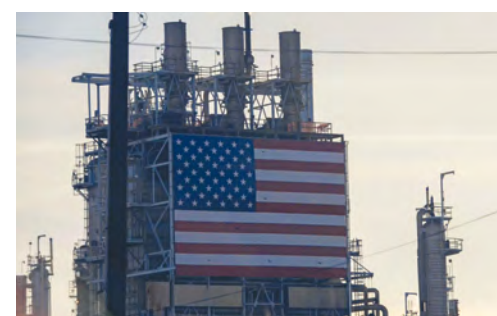
Brothers and sisters, please continue to be your brother's keeper and honor the Code of Excellence with pride, skills, safety and solidarity!

Fernando Salcedo, P.S.

## Health and Happiness in 2021

L.U. 649 (i,lctt,mt&o), ALTON, IL — Happy holidays to our members and their families. May this new year bring peace, good health and happiness. The work scene looks promising for 2021. Thanks to local members for their hard work, as well as our traveling brothers and sisters for their labors.

Argosy Casino negotiations have extended into 2021. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the casino remains closed. Extension attempts for a one-year contract with Ameren stalled; this is due to Illinois SB1652, which amends the Public Utilities Act. Warehouse construction remains steady; Federal Express is relocating to a new facility. Refinery construction is busy with small projects; the work schedule includes new hydrotreater reactors.



Local 649's schedule includes new hydrotreater reactors at Illinois refineries.

# IBEW MERCHANDISE



### QUILT LINED CARHARTT JACKET \$80.00

Navy blue duck with quilted flannel lining. Attached hood with adjustable drawstring. Two large front pockets and two inside pockets. IBEW initials with fist and lightning bolts embroidered on left chest.

### RENEW T-SHIRT \$12.00

100% cotton charcoal long sleeve t-shirt with IBEW logo on back and RENEW / NextGen logos on shoulders.

### WOMEN'S INITIAL WATCH \$100.00

Women's gold-tone watch with embossed IBEW initials on face, expansion band, stainless steel backing and water resistant. Watches have a two-year manufacturer's warranty.

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## LOCAL LINES

Inside wireman apprenticeship applications are to open, with interviews beginning in early 2021.

Brother Pat Bohn's heart transplant was successful, but with difficulties. This has been difficult for Pat and his family. Many thanks to IBEW brothers and sisters for their kindness in contributing assistance. Pat is at home and recovering.

The Christmas pin presentation was canceled due to COVID-19.

Many thanks to 649 staff and officers for support during this difficult year. Thoughts and prayers go out to our brothers and sisters who have lost family to COVID-19.

Thanks to Alan and Terry for providing information to share with the local!!

*Terry Wilhite, P.S.*

## Working our Jurisdiction and Serving Community

L.U. 683 (i), COLUMBUS, OH — As the pandemic persists into the new year, our members continue to man the work in our jurisdiction and serve our community. We continue to fill calls for some large jobs including Project Mustang, Crew Stadium and various Ohio State University projects. We anticipate 2021 to be another busy year for Local 683. Over the weekend before Christmas, our members assisted other central Ohio unions in distributing groceries to residents in need. The Union Shares event was conducted differently this year to account for COVID-19 protocols. With hard work and some additional planning, hundreds of local families received assistance during the holiday season.

*Pat Hook, Pres.*



*Union Shares volunteers (left to right) Chris Evans, Travis Potts, Marlene Villa, Justin Seals and Maurice Quinichett.*

## Local Membership, Apprenticeship Grows

L.U. 915 (i&mt), TAMPA, FL — There were many ups and downs of 2020, but through it all, our local had its share of shining moments. Jeff Marotta, journeyman as well as a JATC instructor, was a recipient of the IBEW Founders' Scholarship, which makes a total of six of



*(Left to right) L.U. 915 Pres. Shawn McDonnell, Danny Griner of Shriners Hospital, Treas. Larry Jenkins and V.P. Graham Hadley.*

our members who have received this prestigious honor. Local 915's negotiating committees were able to get the inside agreements for Busch Gardens and Derby Lane negotiated with increases in wages and benefits. At the virtual Membership Development Conference, we made the Top 20 in membership growth for Inside Construction locals, and we keep growing throughout this pandemic. Local 915's apprenticeship has grown larger than ever and we have had a record year for man-hours. Our apprenticeship has been creative in getting the apprentices the information they need to be successful.

Each year, we have a Christmas party and a toy drive. Although we were not able to have our party, we were still able to have our toy drive and contribute to our partners at the Tampa Bay Shriners Hospital for Children.

We would also like to thank Sister Theresa King for her 16 years of being press secretary for Local 915.

*Shawn McDonnell, Pres.*

## New Leadership at Local 1245 & Honoring a Fallen Member

L.U. 1245 (catv,em,govt,lctt,o,t&u), VACAVILLE, CA — After nearly 40 years on staff, including 15 years as business manager, Tom Dalzell has announced that he is stepping down from his union leadership role and formally resigned from his position in December 2020. In accordance with IBEW bylaws, Local 1245's Executive Board has appointed Senior Assistant Business Manager Bob Dean to fill the role of business manager until the next union leadership election in 2022.

Our new line-clearance tree trimmer training program was awarded a \$4 million grant from the California Workforce Development Board. The funding is part of a \$14.4 million job training grant that the state of California recently secured from the U.S. Department of Education.

When the California Public Utilities

Commission released its proposed decision on PG&E's general rate case, which included a 36% cut to funding for fire mitigation hardening work in 2021 and a 49% funding cut in 2022, we spoke up. Thanks to our advocacy, the CPUC restored the full funding for the program, which means that over the next two years, our members will be performing an additional \$884 million in essential system hardening work.

Local 1245 has established the Jairus Ayeta Line School Scholarship in honor of an IBEW 1245 apprentice who was the victim of a fatal workplace tragedy in 2018 while restoring power at the Carr Fire. Successful applicants will be awarded a full scholarship to VOLTA Training Center in Oregon. Four recipients will be selected each year to receive a one-time scholarship, which will include full tuition, fees, tools, lodging and \$60 per day for meals. For more info, go to [bit.ly/ayetascholarship](http://bit.ly/ayetascholarship).

*Rebecca Band, Communications Dir.*



*(Left to right) L.U. 1347 B.M. Andrew Kirk, Exec. Board Chairman Pat Kallagher, Exec. Board Member Don Scott Smith, Office Coordinator Rachel Glover and Pres. Ray Fowee.*

## Local 1347 Donates Holiday Cheer

L.U. 1347 (ees,em,ptc&u), CINCINNATI, OH — For a fifth year in a row, our local donated gifts to the children staying at the Cincinnati Children's Hospital in November, with 200 teddy bears given to kick off the holiday season. This year, things were a little different due to the pandemic, but we were fortunate enough to still be able to send a little surprise to the children staying at the hospital. The caretakers planned to make gift baskets for the kiddos and to use our teddy bears as part of their baskets. A few of us socially distanced outside of the hospital for the annual picture because it was closed to the public. We are very happy to be able to continue our yearly tradition and can't wait to donate again this time next year!

We sadly report the death of two retired members: Michael Hannah, who passed away on Dec. 7, 2020; and Jack Jackson, who passed on Sept. 27, 2020.

*Andrew Kirk, B.M.*

## A Prosperous Future Ahead

Local 1579 (i&o), AUGUSTA, GA — As I write this article, it is about two months before publication, so I look back on 2020 and look forward to 2021. The COVID-19 vaccine has recently been approved, we await the inauguration of a labor-friendly president and I can see evidence that we will prosper in 2021.

2020 has been a hard year for many in Local 1579. Although we had a very prosperous year, the way we worked changed. We had to figure out ways to do our jobs with an extra layer of safety, and we will most likely have to continue these measures for some time as the vaccine is being distributed. Many of our members got sick from COVID-19, with a range of severity: Some cases were mild, while others had to be hospitalized. Sadly, a few lost family members, and my prayers go out to anyone that has suffered this type of loss. Until this pandemic is under control, please look out for each other and take all the necessary precautions.

By the time you read this, Joe Biden will have been sworn in as the president of the United States. Joe Biden will be a union-friendly president and has never hesitated to publicly talk about good-paying union jobs. Whether you voted for Joe Biden or not, he is our president, and his policies will protect our wages and create jobs for union families and working families.

Our work situation is going to be good again this year. The Vogtle project will start decreasing in manpower and our traveling brothers and sisters will start moving to the next job; I would like to thank you for your help. I am in constant contact with DOE as we get ready for another project in the jurisdiction, the Pitt Production Facility. This job should start hiring soon and will be a long-term project. The details on are still being worked out, so stay tuned.

Until next time, God bless!

*Will Salters, B.M./F.S.*

## Contract Ratified at Kittery Water District

L.U. 1837 (rtb&u), MANCHESTER, ME — Workers at the Kittery Water District have overwhelmingly ratified their first contract with our local. The 15 workers at the water utility include office staff, filtration plant workers, laborers, meter readers, service technicians and technical service staff.

The two-year contract agreement includes wage increases in each year and maintains 100% health insurance coverage paid for by the employer. Other improvements include a requirement for management to give advance notice for schedule changes. It also institutes a grievance and arbitration process for any violations of the agreement.

The employees were able to take advantage of a new Maine state card check law that recognizes unions if a majority of municipal workers in a bargaining unit sign union authorization cards. This allows workers to avoid a drawn-out election process.

The Kittery Water District serves Kittery, Eliot and a portion of York, Maine. They provide drinking water to 12,000 people and the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard.

*Matthew Beck, B.R.*



*Newly appointed Shop Steward Linda Johnson casts her ballot in the Kittery Water District contract-ratification vote.*

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# RETIREEES

## Coming Through in Times of Need

RETIREES CLUB OF L.U. 3, NEW YORK, NY, SOUTH JERSEY CHAPTER — Happy new year to all. We all know 2020 was a tough year, but we made it. I would like to thank Business Manager Robert Shimko of IBEW Local 400, Wall Township, for allowing us to use their outdoor area to conduct our meetings. On Dec. 4, 2020, we held our holiday party at Via Sposito in Old Bridge, NJ. A great time was had by all.

From Dec. 1 through Dec. 24, members of the South Jersey Club worked with Toys for Tots in Hazlet, NJ. This event is sponsored by the Marines of Red Bank, NJ. Unfortunately, the Marines were quarantined with COVID-19. It was left up to the South Jersey retirees to fill all the orders. Led by V.P. Lou Cohen, over 100,000 toys had to be unpacked, sorted into age groups, then filled as orders to charities requesting toys. Volunteers worked 8-10-hour days to get the job done (even through a major snowstorm) and to put a smile on a child's face.

I would also like to thank the members who worked the elections and the food banks throughout the year. The Local 3 South Jersey members come through in times of need.

Thank you and stay safe.

Nancy Savarese, R.S.



(Left to right) South Jersey Local 3 retirees Anthony Savarese, Lou Cohen, Charlie DeSaro, Dennis Hessler, Ed Donnelly, Bob Andreasi and Frank Rapisandi (front) pitched in to support the Toys for Tots program in Hazlet, NJ.

## Local 3 Chapter Loses 'Elder Statesman'

RETIREES CLUB OF L.U.3, NEW YORK, NY, WESTCHESTER/PUTNAM CHAPTER — Although all chapter events are on hold, the one thing COVID-19 could not stop is the normal passing of our relatives and friends. In November, our chapter lost one of our members, Sol Gibbons, who was considered the elder statesman of our chapter; Sol was 93 years old.



Sol Gibbons (1927 — 2020)

Sol was something special. With his British accent, he reminded you of someone who could have been a statesman.

Born in Great Britain in 1927, Sol worked as a union electrician in Great Britain, and, in 1954, emigrated to New York City. Residing in Mount Vernon, Sol was able to secure a work card with Local 501 in White Plains, became a U.S. citizen and as the saying goes, the rest is history.

Sol had been a member of our chapter for about 15 years. He will be remembered as one who was always ready to help when it was needed. He attended most of the chapter events and enjoyed spending time with the men he worked with, as well as the new friends he made as a retiree. Sol was one of a kind; he will be missed.

Dick Mills, Treas.

## Ready for Change

RETIREES CLUB OF L.U. 53, KANSAS CITY, MO — Greetings brothers and sisters. I hope everyone is doing well. I don't have much to report on, but I'm writing this update anyway.

I have many hopes for our future in the great country of America. We will have a new president and vice president, and it's about time. I wish them great success in all that they do. It is my hope that we get the vaccines back on track and we can rid our country and the world of this epidemic once and for all.

I am more than ready for change, as I'm sure all Americans are. Change is one of my hopes for the future.

I am sorry to report that we lost another longtime friend and brother. Carl Wilson passed on New Year's Day. Rest in peace, brother, and may the good Lord take you home.

Stay healthy and safe!

Duane Pearce, P.S.

## Local 58 Celebrates Club Treasurer's 99th Birthday

RETIREES CLUB OF L.U. 58, DETROIT, MI — On Dec. 1, 2020, our club treasurer Ray Owen celebrated his 99th birthday. With COVID-19 still a part of daily life, the occasion of Ray's birthday was a drive-by celebration. His family and friends instigated the whole thing as a surprise. During a snowstorm, well-wishers in 50+ cars paraded past his home, and Channel 4 News was there to document the occasion. In closing, his VFW brothers and sisters sang him "Happy Birthday" from the bottom of his driveway. He said it was his best birthday. Congratulations, Ray!

We are three months into the new year, with a new president, a shift in power in the Senate and the optimism to continue to create a better life for all of us. Jan. 6 brought images of horror into our living rooms. After sheltering in place for safety, Congress returned to their jobs later that day and many important points were made, including, "We must love our neighbors." As unionists and Americans, we know how to work, so we will continue to roll up our sleeves and do the work of a proud and strong America! Grassroots as deep as ours will aid us in this important work!

Pat Nuznov, P.S.

## Thanks to Hard-Working Local Members, Past and Present

RETIREES CLUB OF L.U. 105, HAMILTON, ON — Although very late this year, we would all like to wish you the very best for 2021! Hopefully, COVID-19 will be under control when you are reading this. If not, please keep safe, friends, and do your part to get rid of or at the very least get control of it. Our prayers go out to each and every one of you.

Sadly, due to COVID-19, we here in Hamilton haven't been participating in any group gatherings, so we don't have any news to report.

Especially during these times, please remember that all that we have been able to enjoy and look forward to is made possible by our very hard-working local members and Executive Board, past and present. Our heartfelt thanks to ALL of you!

Eden McLean, P.S.

## Prioritizing Caution and Safety, As Always

RETIREES CLUB OF L.U. 164, JERSEY CITY, NJ — With all the COVID-19-related shutdowns, the Retirees Association get-togethers have been on hold since March 2020.

We are eager to start again with our monthly luncheons. We are a cautious group of electricians using our heads to be safe, having done that throughout our careers.

But we still raised money for underprivileged people during the holidays. Our Golf League is on the horizon. The 50-year members received their gold watches, diamond pins and

certificates, but will have to wait until next December for their Gala Dinner Dance.

All union electricians and families, please stay safe. We will make it and celebrate together in the near future.

David Judovin, P.S.

## Hoping for a Better 2021

RETIREES CLUB OF L.U. 317, HUNTINGTON, WV — It has been a really trying time for everyone, especially for the older group of retirees who aren't able to have retirees' luncheons. I'm hopeful that we will be back in 2021. Prayers.

Jerry Booth, Pres.

## Retiree Group Outlook on Pause

RETIREES CLUB OF L.U. 649, ALTON, IL — The outlook for our retirees' groups affected by the impact of COVID-19 remains the same; "paused" is the best way to describe it.

As I receive correspondence from our officers of the retiree body, I will enter it into the retirees Local Lines.

Local 649 Retirees Club monthly meetings were being held the last Thursday of each month. Meetings are altered for holidays. I will update you as changes are made and the officers direct me to do so.

To all of our IBEW family everywhere, stay safe, be healthy, enjoy family, and may 2021 be a better year!!

Terry Wilhite, P.S.

## Local 702 Longtime & Active Retiree Club Member

RETIREES CLUB OF L.U. 702, WEST FRANKFORT, IL — The local is sad to announce the passing of retiree Jim Campbell. After working for General Telephone and Electronics for 25 years, he was appointed to the staff of IBEW Local 702 as a business representative in 1985. Jim retired from the local in 1999 and in June 2020 was honored for being a 60-year member of the IBEW. He

was an active member and supporter of the local's Retiree Club and will be missed at future events and functions. We thank Brother Campbell for his efforts and service to the local and its members.

We continue to monitor the current COVID-19 situation and will attempt to schedule the annual retiree luncheon only if we are confident it is safe for our retirees to do so. We missed seeing everyone last year and are hopeful we can get together in 2021!

Mark Baker, B.R./P.S.



Brother Jim Campbell was a 60-year member of the IBEW.

## Your Health is Important

RETIREES CLUB OF L.U. 756, DAYTONA BEACH, FL — Happy New Year! Hello everyone, hope you are all doing good! I just wanted to let you know that it's been decided that we are not going to plan any retiree meetings until September 2021. Your health is important to us. We look forward to seeing you in the future and catching up!

Diane Gibbs, P.S.

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—In Memoriam—

Members for Whom PBF Death Claims were Approved in January 2021

Local	Surname	Date of Death	Local	Surname	Date of Death	Local	Surname	Date of Death	Local	Surname	Date of Death	Local	Surname	Date of Death	Local	Surname	Date of Death
1	Barry, J. A.	8/17/19	18	Blank, E. W.	7/26/20	103	Prevett, M. A.	11/2/20	275	Osborne, E. V.	9/25/20	477	Maroda, N. L.	9/28/20	716	McInroe, J. D.	7/5/20
1	Eckelkamp, W. O.	10/27/20	20	Counts, R. E.	5/29/20	103	Quirk, J. M.	11/6/20	280	Croughwell, J. W.	3/31/20	479	Webb, L. M.	10/14/20	716	Virgadamo, P. V.	9/1/20
1	Flaugher, K. P.	9/8/20	22	McIntyre, R. L.	1/14/20	104	Knowlton, B. A.	12/3/20	280	Van Handel, D. L.	12/3/20	508	Oliver, K. L.	7/17/20	725	Staggs, J. E.	6/12/20
1	Hydar, R. N.	10/16/20	24	Gover, R. D.	10/22/20	105	Lynas, A. M.	12/26/20	291	Wolff, L.	7/3/20	518	Finch, B.	9/13/20	760	Hoskins, G. S.	10/31/20
1	Lauer, D. J.	10/5/20	24	Wanex, W. J.	8/17/20	110	Carlson, D. G.	11/5/20	292	Storey, B. M.	11/8/20	520	Gomez, J. L.	11/7/20	760	Phipps, S. W.	11/4/20
3	Bracht, T. J.	3/19/20	25	Catalano, A.	8/21/20	110	Marrier, R. L.	11/11/20	294	Harwood, D. W.	7/17/20	532	Staehnke, B. B.	9/20/20	760	White, H. L.	11/21/20
3	Carrubba, D. C.	3/2/20	25	Potvin, C.	10/15/20	111	Livingston, J. B.	10/17/20	302	Smith, W. J.	9/6/20	557	Weiland, S. E.	12/3/20	794	Wilson, E. A.	8/5/20
3	D'Ambra, D.	6/14/20	26	Stickman, R. N.	9/19/20	111	Reppard, R. M.	10/1/20	304	Faulk, C. K.	10/18/20	558	Terry, R. S.	10/21/20	804	Frieday, D. J.	9/11/20
3	Finn, T. M.	9/22/20	41	Williams, E. L.	4/8/20	115	Coyle, L.	11/27/20	305	Fisher, C. D.	11/5/20	568	Girard, G.	7/24/20	876	Cornell, D. R.	8/29/20
3	Fox, R. F.	9/30/20	43	Fields, G. J.	10/26/20	126	Messier, A.	10/21/20	322	Jackson, J. R.	4/20/20	570	Cordova, K. J.	11/24/20	890	Ingram, A. R.	10/6/20
3	George, P. D.	10/12/20	43	Schenkenberge, R.	10/26/20	131	Shearer, L. L.	7/18/20	322	Miller, J. J.	12/13/20	570	Hunsecker, D. E.	7/12/20	903	Hicks, T. B.	11/10/19
3	Gibbs, J. D.	4/5/20	44	Pappert, M. R.	12/8/20	134	Cerva, D. S.	10/16/20	325	Edwards, R. T.	8/6/20	570	Marquis, W. J.	9/8/20	910	Cox, M. O.	9/23/20
3	Harap, S.	7/6/20	44	Simonson, F. H.	11/11/20	134	Cheiken, M.	10/1/20	332	Barlet, C. J.	5/2/20	570	Wood, R. D.	8/21/20	917	Goodin, B. A.	9/9/20
3	Jervise, H.	3/27/20	46	Benjamin, R. L.	10/30/20	134	Cody, C. T.	9/14/20	332	Marier, R. R.	10/5/20	583	Saucedo, J. G.	10/1/20	934	Rhinehardt, J. L.	9/6/20
3	Johnson, W.	10/30/20	46	Blaylock, W. H.	7/18/20	134	Kallianis, J. H.	8/23/20	332	Tokiwa, S.	9/3/20	586	Kelly, D. T.	10/10/20	952	Skinner, D. A.	8/25/20
3	Kapilevich, G.	9/30/20	46	Osterhout, G. B.	7/3/20	134	Liszkiewicz, J. S.	4/25/20	332	Weber, B. G.	10/20/20	586	Leblanc, Y.	9/16/20	975	Rask, A. L.	9/12/20
3	Kostishak, J. P.	5/23/20	46	Powis, B. R.	7/31/20	134	Mazzone, H. M.	10/13/20	340	Smith, H. J.	7/31/20	589	Maccarone, A. A.	10/19/20	993	Berkhout, T.	11/11/20
3	Laurito, C. S.	2/12/20	46	Raether, S. E.	10/7/20	134	Seils, D. P.	10/2/20	349	Dunlop, W. A.	10/5/20	596	Cormier, J. K.	9/9/20	993	Townsend, F.	10/15/20
3	Lippman, B. L.	2/23/20	46	Stouffer, B. M.	10/16/20	134	Speziale, N. P.	9/21/20	349	Hammon, R. E.	11/1/20	605	Austin, S. H.	10/6/20	995	Davis, L.	10/26/20
3	Lovece, T. M.	8/28/20	46	Uhrich, S. W.	9/29/20	134	Strohmeier, W.	9/1/20	351	Bacon, R. W.	11/11/20	606	Cooper, G. H.	9/25/20	995	Stroughter, S. F.	10/3/20
3	Masella, R. S.	8/6/20	46	Williams, S. R.	10/27/20	134	Willis, R.	10/18/20	351	MacMillan, J. J.	4/25/20	613	Adams, W. S.	8/14/20	1077	Williams, G. D.	6/23/20
3	Murphy, H. G.	10/24/20	47	Conrad, J. A.	9/16/20	134	Zawilenski, J. J.	8/24/20	353	Cobitz, T.	9/20/20	613	Evans, M.	9/7/20	1245	Dutton, B. R.	8/16/20
3	O'Brien, J. J.	6/18/20	48	Bronson, M. C.	9/26/20	136	McArthur, J. D.	10/25/20	353	Greisberg, G. W.	11/2/20	613	Frost, T. R.	10/30/20	1319	Smith, R. J.	11/24/20
3	O'Brien, D. P.	9/8/20	48	Conner, L. G.	11/10/20	136	Rubio, R. I.	7/23/20	353	Ramsey, L. H.	11/3/20	613	Riney, D. C.	10/4/20	1340	Mason, T. D.	8/26/20
3	Roban, N. U.	3/13/20	48	Fox, W. L.	11/7/20	143	Mayo, M. R.	6/29/20	354	Black, M. R.	9/19/20	613	Sledge, J. M.	10/10/20	1547	Clark, C. E.	10/28/20
3	Rohe, B.	3/9/20	48	Powell, J. E.	9/11/20	145	Tisinger, L. R.	11/7/20	357	Sheffield, M. H.	10/12/20	613	Vinson, T. L.	3/21/20	1547	Herman, R. M.	8/11/20
3	Russo, R. A.	10/2/20	53	Webster, C. D.	10/12/20	153	Dare, G. U.	8/23/20	359	Marcano, J. A.	11/6/20	625	Hartt, K. G.	9/18/20	1852	Randall, D. P.	12/2/19
3	Strack, H. W.	8/1/19	57	Romero, B. D.	6/30/20	160	Kruggel, D. F.	7/23/20	363	Jacobs, H. M.	9/28/20	666	Dorn, W. A.	9/30/20	2166	Roy, C. W.	10/2/19
3	Wald, G.	7/19/20	58	Harlow, R. E.	10/1/20	175	Goins, J. S.	9/3/20	369	Gibson, H. C.	10/21/20	666	Duke, R.	6/6/20	I.O. (11)	De Young, J.	10/4/20
5	Peters, R. A.	10/9/20	58	Smalarz, D. A.	10/20/20	175	Hale, S. T.	10/8/20	369	Graves, S. G.	7/19/20	683	Bond, J. R.	11/5/20	I.O. (81)	Armbruster, C.	11/7/20
6	Maher, J. R.	9/22/20	60	Antuna, D.	7/19/20	175	Shaver, D. L.	10/9/20	369	Matthews, R. B.	9/19/20	683	Thompson, C. R.	10/30/20	I.O. (134)	Arno, K. C.	10/14/20
6	Olson, M. H.	10/4/20	60	Romero, J. J.	10/30/20	176	Bebar, R. P.	9/4/20	396	Steere, L. T.	8/9/20	697	Heming, K. E.	11/15/20	I.O. (591)	Zaremba, T. P.	9/14/20
8	Lorenzen, R. F.	9/22/20	66	Pyle, J. D.	9/26/20	177	Bell, O. W.	9/23/20	400	Grande, P. W.	4/9/20	697	LaMantia, A. S.	11/27/20	I.O. (714)	Ringgenberg, C. L.	10/5/20
8	Snell, R. K.	9/5/20	68	Englund, J. A.	7/10/20	177	Cannady, J. J.	9/27/20	400	Merker, R. B.	10/14/20	700	McKee, C. G.	4/20/20	I.O. (774)	Reeves, C. E.	12/27/19
9	Nowak, J.	11/20/20	68	Wiest, R. L.	4/30/20	177	Wilson, A.	10/25/20	400	Vitiello, A. A.	7/5/20	702	Brockett, C. E.	10/26/20	I.O. (794)	Barnak, H. H.	10/11/20
11	Burgard, T. M.	6/15/20	71	Evans, T. J.	4/10/20	197	While, C. E.	5/16/20	401	Kennedy, R. W.	10/12/20	702	Loyd, R. E.	10/4/20	I.O. (1788)	Hughes, R. J.	9/8/20
11	Hall, T. E.	7/13/20	71	Fichtner, D. K.	8/16/20	212	Derrick, S. N.	9/26/20	405	Shea, J. F.	9/30/20	702	Swan, J. E.	7/26/20	Pens. (840)	Gienow, D. G.	7/31/20
11	Hermann, E. W.	6/11/20	77	McIntyre, D. L.	7/15/20	226	Eberhart, N. E.	9/4/20	413	Peters, E. L.	10/3/20	712	Bender, R. W.	8/18/20	Pens. (I.O.)	Adams, J. C.	10/10/20
11	Hughes, G. A.	10/21/20	77	Webber, E. C.	9/4/20	236	Schmidt, R. G.	10/8/20	424	Carter, D. R.	7/24/20	712	Fink, J. K.	8/3/20	Pens. (I.O.)	Demos, G. T.	2/11/19
11	Rodriguez, J.	10/28/20	82	Bogard, H. A.	10/26/20	237	Knox, R. J.	8/17/20	424	Wilson, L. E.	10/12/20	714	Bachmeier, P.	10/31/20	Pens. (I.O.)	Dungavell, R.	7/20/20
11	Spence, J. O.	8/8/20	82	Phipps, R. S.	11/27/20	254	Oka, J. H.	8/23/20	443	Vardamaskos, J.	9/24/20	714	Ellsworth, L. D.	10/10/20	Pens. (I.O.)	Gagliardi, F.	10/6/20
15	Foti, P.	8/28/20	98	Rhodes, J. F.	11/11/20	254	Wolff, E.	9/21/20	449	Hill, R. K.	11/7/20	714	Schatz, N.	9/29/20	Pens. (I.O.)	Hopkins, D. R.	10/7/20
16	Callaway, D. R.	10/2/20	102	Griggs, D. R.	9/1/20	258	Simpson, D. C.	9/1/20	449	Webb, J. W.	12/7/20	716	Delahoussaye, O. J.	8/28/20	Pens. (I.O.)	Mantis, C. L.	10/14/20
16	Hubele, J. T.	11/4/20	102	Ross, G. W.	9/8/20	265	McCall, E. K.	7/18/20	453	Southard, J. E.	10/13/19	716	Gomez, R. H.	3/20/20	Pens. (I.O.)	Meuwissen, H. A.	10/5/20
17	Miller, D. W.	2/24/20	103	Brown, R. E.	9/16/20	271	Brockmeyer, J. S.	11/18/20	474	Bryant, C. G.	11/21/20	716	Hanka, W.	9/28/20	Pens. (I.O.)	Yarnell, F. E.	10/10/20

Summary Annual Report for  
Int'l Brotherhood of Electrical Workers' Pension Benefit Fund

This is a summary of the annual report for the INT'L BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS' PENSION BENEFIT FUND, (Employer Identification No. 53-0088380, Plan No. 001) for the period July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020. The annual report has been filed with the Employee Benefits Security Administration, as required under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA).

BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Benefits under the plan are provided by a trust (benefits are provided in whole from trust funds). Plan expenses were \$173,623,168. These expenses included \$11,238,030 in administrative expenses and \$162,385,138 in benefits paid to participants and beneficiaries. A total of 519,681 persons were participants in or beneficiaries of the plan at the end of the plan year, although not all of these persons had yet earned the right to receive benefits.

The value of plan assets, after subtracting liabilities of the plan, was \$2,127,645,456 as of June 30, 2020 compared to \$2,163,333,316 as of July 1, 2019. During

the plan year the plan experienced a decrease in its net assets of \$35,687,860. This decrease includes unrealized appreciation or depreciation in the value of plan assets; that is, the difference between the value of the plan's assets at the end of the year and the value of the assets at the beginning of the year, or the cost of assets acquired during the year. The plan had total income of \$137,935,308, including employee contributions of \$87,996,517, gains of \$41,333,107 from the sale of assets, earnings from investments of \$10,852,001 and other income of \$-2,246,317.

YOUR RIGHTS TO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

You have the right to receive a copy of the full annual report, or any part thereof, on request. The items listed below are included in that report:

- 1. An accountant's report;
- 2. Assets held for investment;
- 3. Transactions in excess of 5 percent of the plan assets; and

- 4. Information regarding any common or collective trust, pooled separate accounts, master trusts or 103-12 investment entities in which the plan participates.

To obtain a copy of the full annual report, or any part thereof, write or call the office of the Plan Administrator,

International Secretary-Treasurer  
900 7th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001-4089  
82-4445797 (Employer Identification Number)  
(202) 728-6200

The charge to cover copying costs will be \$14 for the full report, or \$0 per page for any part thereof.

You also have the right to receive from the plan administrator, on request and at no charge, a statement of the assets and liabilities of the plan and accompanying notes, or a statement of income and expenses of the plan and accompanying notes, or

both. If you request a copy of the full annual report from the plan administrator, these two statements and accompanying notes will be included as part of that report. The charge to cover copying costs given above does not include a charge for the copying of these portions of the report because these portions are furnished without charge.

You also have the legally protected right to examine the annual report at the main office of the plan:

International Brotherhood of Electrical  
Workers' Pension Benefit Fund  
900 7th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

and at the U.S. Department of Labor in Washington, D.C., or to obtain a copy from the U.S. Department of Labor upon payment of copying costs. Requests to the Department should be addressed to: U.S. Department of Labor, Employee Benefits Security Administration, Public Disclosure Room, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW, Suite N-1513, Washington, D.C. 20210. ■



## WHO WE ARE

# Alabama Local Offers Opportunity, Hope to Forgotten Men

**H**omelessness has many causes, but one near-universal effect: hopelessness.

But thanks to a unique partnership with a local shelter, Birmingham, Ala., Local 136 is tackling the issue in an innovative way, offering hope to a portion of the city's homeless population in the form of training, jobs and a crash course in union solidarity.

"Every single one of us has made a mistake in our lives," said Matt Dudley, director of Local 136's Joint Apprenticeship Training Center. "We're looking at this as an opportunity for us to give back to our community."

This philosophy helped the local get connected with the Brother Bryan Mission, a 65-bed shelter for homeless men near Birmingham's Civil Rights District that's celebrating its 80th anniversary this year.

"Although the homeless or the at-risk population of Alabama may not be the ideal recruiting ground for some places, we see these folks as people that just need a hand," Dudley said.

One of the things that made the Brother Bryan Mission especially attractive to Local 136 Business Manager Bill Blackman was the special attention given to those who are also struggling with addiction.

"If you know anyone that's homeless, that's a problem," Blackman said. "Oftentimes, the problem's not just the homelessness, it's also what caused it."

Brother Bryan's residential recovery and back-to-work programs are designed to address the causes of a person's homelessness and the barriers standing in the way of their becoming productive again, as well as to provide a temporary place to live until they can make enough money to support a home of their own.

"The mission helps them every step of the way to try to get these men get back on their feet," Dudley said.

The local works with the mission's staff to find candidates at the shelter who might be interested in learning new electrical trade skills, potentially putting them on their way toward a meaningful career as they recover from their addictions.

"We have so much work in our pipeline, we sometimes have trouble finding enough people, so we recruit heavily," Dudley said. In that regard, working with the Brother Bryan Mission is a win-win.

The mission's program director, Brian Keen, vets candidates before referring them to the local, Blackman said. "Then, they go through the normal approval process to get accepted into the apprenticeship," he said. "We've gotten some really good guys going through."

Not every candidate has worked out, Blackman said. "But the ones that have show what the IBEW is all about," he said. "They want that second chance real bad."

One of the local's most successful



*An abundance of work has pushed Birmingham, Ala., Local 136 to be creative in its search for qualified apprentices, some of whom have been found at the city's Brother Bryan Mission.*

examples is apprentice John Hancock.

"I had a problem with alcohol, and it led me to a series of events that I wound up being incarcerated," Hancock said. "That moment when I got out of jail, I was homeless, didn't have anywhere to go."

He headed to the Brother Bryan Mission. "I knew I had to get somewhere that could help me get my life straightened out so I could become a productive member of society again and get on with my life," Hancock said. "I had a friend who was a counselor there. He told me about the IBEW and set things up with Matt."

The now-fourth-year apprentice said he was glad an opportunity like this presented itself. "I would have been too intimidated to apply on my own," he said.

"Most locals try to help give back to their communities," Dudley said. "We have a very philanthropic attitude, too, and we're always trying to break down barriers to electrical work."

"We were able to put John on jobs that were just blocks away from the mission, where he was living at the time," Blackman said. "He would walk or ride his bicycle — whatever it took — to get to that job every day. That's how dedicated he was to turning his life around."

It wasn't long before Hancock had made enough money through his apprenticeship to buy a vehicle of his own, Blackman said.

"It's a lot of people to help you, in the IBEW and at the mission," said Hancock, who said he might like to become a traveler after he tops out. "That's really who the success story is. I'm just a product of what they're doing."

"It's been a long road," he said. "They've guided me and held my hand the whole entire way."

"A great thing about working with Brother Bryan's is that they're not just giving these men a handout," said Business Manager Blackman. "The IBEW needs qualified electricians; these men need opportunity and someone to believe in them."

"When we can make that work for everyone, we're able to change lives," he said.

"It makes me very proud to see Local 136 making a difference, not only in the community but in people's lives as well," said Fifth District International Vice President Brian K. Thompson. "One of the objectives of the IBEW is 'to seek a higher standard of living.' To me, that statement not only applies on the job but also in the community. The fact that Local 136 and other locals in this district create outreach programs like this in their communities lets people know what the IBEW stands for and who our brothers and sisters really are."

*Learn more about the Brother Bryan Mission at [bbmission.com](http://bbmission.com).*



*The Electrical Worker* was the name of the first official publication of the National Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in 1893 (the NBEW became the IBEW in 1899 with the expansion of the union into Canada). The name and format of the publication have changed over the years. This newspaper is the official publication of the IBEW and seeks to capture the courage and spirit that motivated the founders of the Brotherhood and continue to inspire the union's members today. The masthead of this newspaper is an adaptation of that of the first edition in 1893.

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### HOW TO REACH US

We welcome letters from our readers. The writer should include his or her name, address and, if applicable, IBEW local union number and card number. Family members should include the local union number of the IBEW member to whom *The Electrical Worker* is mailed. Please keep letters as brief as possible. *The Electrical Worker* reserves the right to select letters for publication and edit all submissions for length.

#### Send letters to:

Letters to the Editor, *The Electrical Worker*, 900 Seventh Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001

**Or send by email to:** [media@ibew.org](mailto:media@ibew.org)

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*The Electrical Worker* (print)  
ISSN 2332-113X

*The Electrical Worker* (online)  
ISSN 2332-1148

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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Electrical Worker*, 900 Seventh Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.

*The Electrical Worker* will not be held responsible for views expressed by correspondents.

Paid advertising is not accepted.

Publications Mail Agreement No. 40011756.  
Canada Post: Return undeliverables to P.O. Box 2601,  
6915 Dixie Rd, Mississauga, ON L4T 0A9.



# Despite COVID-19 Changes, Members Shine at National Electrician Championships



Left: Greg Anliker from Elgin, Ill., Local 117 combined with San Francisco Local 6 apprentice Noreen Buckley to take first place at the Ideal National Championships, which were modified this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Right: Local 6 journeyman Kristen Clayton and Aurora, Ill., Local 461 apprentice Alex Cook finished third in the competition, which aired on ESPN2.

## Skills, Safety, Speed Key to Electrical Competition

Like most major events over the last year, the COVID-19 pandemic put serious restrictions on the Ideal National Championships, which annually pits the top electricians from across the United States against each other in skill competitions. Organizers dramatically scaled back this year's event to comply with health guidelines.

But that didn't stop IBEW members from continuing to dominate.

Elgin, Ill., Local 117 journeyman wireman Greg Anliker, who is sometimes referred to as the Michael Jordan of the competition after winning the individual pro title in three of the previous four years, partnered with San Francisco Local 6 apprentice Noreen Buckley to win the three-team competition, held in a Chicago television studio with no spectators in early October.

Local 6 journeyman Kristen Clayton combined with Aurora, Ill., Local 461 apprentice Alex Cook to finish third. The pandemic wiped out all regional qualifying tournaments and the national championships, which had been scheduled for November in Nashville, Tenn.

Instead, organizers invited six top wiremen and apprentices to a "finals" championship. A blind draw put them on a two-person team consisting of one journeyman and one apprentice.

Anliker and Buckley finished far ahead of the competition with 249 points, 63 more than the second-place duo. That earned both a trip to 2021's national finals, which are scheduled to be held this coming December in Nashville.

Competitors were able to earn a maximum of 100 points on each event, with 70% of the score weighted toward workmanship, 20% toward safety — as judged by on-site inspectors — and 10% toward

speed. All the entrants tested negative for COVID-19 after arriving in Chicago.

"Even if it had been halfway across the country, I would have gone," said Anliker, who had to drive only a little more than an hour to Chicago. "It's always a great experience. We've all been laying pretty low because of this COVID thing. It was a nice little weekend getaway."

Anliker said he's pleased organizers were able to hold some kind of event during the pandemic. It helped keep the Ideal National Championships, which were in their fifth year, in the public eye. The 2020 event was televised on a tape-delayed basis by ESPN2, just as other national championships have been. ESPN play-by-play man Jason Benetti, who also is the lead announcer for MLB's Chicago White Sox, served as the host.

Anliker's experience and expertise were evident throughout the competition, but he also gave credit to Buckley, who he had never met until everyone arrived in Chicago.

"She was a complete all-star," he said. "She rocked it."

Buckley and Clayton both were in the competition at the recommendation of Local 6 training instructor Christie Peterson.

Buckley confessed to having some jitters in the days leading up to the event, and that only intensified after learning she would be paired with Anliker. But that feeling went away once she put on the tools in Chicago.

"By the time the competition started, all of us were ready to jump in and do the work and show what we could do," she said. "At that point, the nerves weren't really there. It was more excitement and the competitiveness kicked in."

Buckley is originally from the Phila-

delphia area and graduated from La Salle University with a bachelor's degree in psychology. But she later realized she wanted to work with her hands and live on the West Coast.

She headed to San Francisco and was accepted into the Local 6 apprenticeship program. Both she and Clayton are active in Local 6's RENEW chapter, the IBEW's initiative to develop young leaders in the union.

"I was just glad that Kristen and I got to represent the women [in the IBEW]," Buckley said. "We have the skill, we have the talent and we put in the work. I don't think a lot of people know about the competition but it's great that it happens."

Clayton planned to teach art but worked as a bartender and at some other jobs after high school. She decided to pursue a career in the trades after seeing how much her future husband enjoyed his work as a member of the Iron Workers. She earned her journeyman status last year.

"It was humbling because I thought I was going to do a lot better [in Chicago] but I ended up learning a lot more than I expected," she said. "I know there is a lot more for me to learn. It will be an ongoing journey for me in the electrical business."

Added Peterson: "Noreen always has got a smile on her face. She is super personable and she really pays attention in class. She comes up with amazing questions. She's doing her homework and paying attention. She wants to make this a career."

"Kristen is another amazing woman. She was super helpful to her classmates and her brothers and sisters. She's got a great attitude. They are very similar and do so much for our local."

Cook's father has owned an IBEW signatory contractor for decades. The younger Cook served in the U.S. Army before beginning his apprenticeship and is scheduled to top out in May. He was recommended for the show by Local 461 officials, including Business Manager Joel Pyle.

Like some of the other IBEW mem-

bers who participated, Cook noted the four events were centered primarily on residential work. Most IBEW members work on the more industrial construction side and he is no different, he said. That proved to be a big adjustment.

"On top of that, you've got five cameras in your face while you're trying to rough-in an outlet," Cook said. "In a competition like that, when you're working so hard and so fast, it's the little things you sometimes lose sight of, the small details."

"But it was so fun. It was a blast and everyone was supportive of each other. We're on a group chat and we still talk to this day."

Witnessing Anliker's overall excellence was a reminder of the importance of preparation, Cook said.

"You can definitely tell from watching

him that 90% of his success comes from before he even steps on the field," he said. "We got a sheet telling us what all our tasks were going to be. But his experience, along with his quick-thinking ability and adjusting to the layout, gave him an advantage before he even touched a tool."

Any IBEW member wanting to participate should visit [www.idealnationals.com](http://www.idealnationals.com). Organizers urge them to register as quickly as possible, given the uncertain impact the pandemic will have on this year's event. The 2019 event attracted more than 58,000 entries. Only 162 made it to nationals.

Founded in 1916, Ideal has been a leading maker of electrician's tools and supplies for more than century. The company is now based in Sycamore, Ill., about 55 miles west of Chicago. ■

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