For 50 years, the Electrical Workers Minority Caucus has been, in the words of President Emeritus Robbie Sparks, the conscience of the IBEW.

Since its inception, the EWMC has been organizing and pushing for a more inclusive union, one that, in accordance with the IBEW Constitution, seeks to represent all workers in the electrical industry.

It was formed from a direct action that threatened an informational picket outside the 30th International Convention in 1974. International Treasurer Harry Van Arsdale Jr. spoke with the concerned members, leading to International President Charles Pillard meeting with a representative group of them, avoiding the picket and sparking the beginning of the EWMC.

“When I look at the history and the work of the EWMC, I see a group of members living the principles of this union,” International President Kenneth W. Cooper said.

A major focus of the EWMC is training members to be informed leaders and activists, whether through its annual leadership conference or its signature Breakthrough Leadership Training Institute.

The EWMC showcases the many talented members across the country that may not otherwise ever be seen or heard or hold local offices, but have been the backbone of determination and leadership for decades within our union,” said Bennie Bye, an international representative in the Civic and Community Engagement Department. “The EWMC has always served as a pioneer and a safe space of belonging while helping labor recognize the value of all labor.”

The focus on developing talent was a response to an all-too-common refrain from leaders in many industries, not just the IBEW, that there weren’t enough minority members to promote. What the EWMC showed, decade after decade, is that leaders, especially in unions, can come from anywhere and are built, not found.

“Organizations need to be able to think outside the box, and that only happens with diversity,” EWMC President Keith Edwards said. “Diversity in attendance and structure brings about new thoughts and ideas. It also sends a message to other underrepresented members that leadership is possible for them, too.

“I know how good it feels for me when I see someone like me leading,” said EWMC Vice President Grace Smith, who’s also a member of Tampa, Fla., Local 824. “It makes a difference because it shows that this institution is really invested in me and my future.”

EWMC continued on page 4
It’s Our Time

Try as they might, even skeptics can’t deny that we’re in the midst of an extraordinary economic growth in the United States. The job market is sizzling, the economy is bustling at the seams, and the labor movement is growing.

Last year, 261,000 private-sector workers joined a union, more than double the surge we saw in 2022. And the vast majority of new members are in their 20s and 30s. After decades of decline, our movement is young, diverse and vibrant.

The 2023 report from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics even shows an uptick in some of the rest of the workforce. Florida added 62,000 unionized workers, Texas added 58,000.

These and other remarkable numbers for 2023 have been pouring in from economists and analysts of every stripe: nonpartisan, liberal-leaning and conservative.

By every measure, America’s economy is stronger than ever, surpassing every other nation in post-pandemic recovery. After 1.6 million jobs were created in 2023, 355,000 were added in January 2024, double the forecast. The U.S. has two full years of economic growth ahead of it.

All the while, inflation continues to decline, with economists predicting that it will drop even further in 2024. There’s still a ways to go, of course, especially with the sticker shock we’re all still experiencing at the grocery store.

There’s even more to feel good about right now, but our work is not finished. The challenges are many. Here are a few:\n\n• We won a historic vote to end the so-called right-to-work law in Michigan last year, but these misleading anti-union laws persist in 21 states. Wherever these laws are allowed to stay on the books, they constrains the efforts of all unions to organize and operate.
• In Georgia, a bill is in play to withhold state incentives from new businesses that let workers organize by card check instead of requiring a secret-ballot election.
• While private-sector unions are growing, the Supreme Court’s 2018 Janus ruling is clipping away at membership among public workers.

But think about this: We’re still in the infancy of President Biden’s historic job-creating laws — the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the American Rescue Plan Act, the Inflation Reduction Act, and the CHIPS and Science Act.

Together, they are driving trillions of dollars in private investment in manufacturing and construction, with millions more new, good jobs projected over the next decade. And don’t forget that they also contain protections the IBEW insisted on, including prevailing wage, project labor agreements and the hiring of registered apprentices on projects receiving federal funds.

The IBEW was in the room when these laws were drafted. We played a hand in creating these conditions that are so ripe for growing the union. There is no better time than now to accelerate organizing at every local as we push to reach 1 million members in five years.

I want to thank every one of you for the work you do, and will do, to help us reach this critical goal.

Resident Joe Biden signed the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act into law in 2021, launching a once-in-a-generation investment in our nation’s infrastructure. This law will not only modernize our transportation and energy system but also create millions of family-sustaining, union jobs.

One of the law’s top priorities was the creation of a national network of electric vehicle charging stations.

Despite what the critics say, federal investment in EV technology has meant work for our members, and a flood of new jobs is projected in the coming years. So, it is vital that we enroll more members in EVITP training.

The IBEW is leading the transition to a modern transportation system, and that is because we have the best electrical training program in all of North America.

Every local and contractor must ensure that their members know about the opportunities offered through our EVITP program. You can learn more at EVITP.org.

From the earliest days of the electrical industry, the IBEW has been at the forefront of every energy revolution, making new emerging technologies a reality, and EVs are no different.

The opportunity is here. Let’s go and seize it.

Leading the EV Charge

My IBEW Story

Jonathan “J.J.” Darrow, construction electrician
Atlanta Local 613

“For about 25 years, I worked in the transportation industry. I started out as a teenag-er just out of school loading trucks and worked my way up. I had various positions routing freight from the Atlanta area, which kept me very busy. Toward the end, I was a freight broker working all hours of the day and night for a set salary. I had reached a ceiling in this position and didn’t see much opportunity for financial or personal improvement or growth.

This, of course, was a nonunion office position that rarely got more than 3% increases based on company performance and budgets. There was no sense of a finish line, little job satisfaction, absolutely no bargaining power. It felt like a trap of sorts, a dead end.

I had been aware of the IBEW ever since I was in high school. In fact, I had a couple of friends there who had graduated and joined the IBEW to pursue electrical careers. I considered it, but for whatever reason thought it wasn’t for me at the time. In hindsight, I know this was a huge missed opportunity. Luckily, one of my friends from childhood, Josh Kranke, helped me get started and is now my brother at Local 613. With that support, I knew there could be a different sort of life for me.

Once I reached my wildest end with the mistrusts of nonunion work, I came to the middle realization (potentially, a midlife crisis) that we’re only here once and for a short time, so we should do everything we can to make the best of this life. I decided at 45 years old to do what I should’ve done at 18. I spoke with one of the larger contractors in Atlanta and was hired into the construction w ireman/construction electrician program and joined a few months later. This was one of the best decisions I’ve ever made.

Now that I’m here, the day-and-night difference between now and my nonunion days continues to amaze me. I’ve got benefits, support and overall brotherhood. I have a few health issues that were absolutely devastating, and my care came not only from insurance but also from my local, which offered a short-term benefit.

I never experienced anything remotely close to it in nonunion. My wife and kids have noticed a difference in the way I carry myself and how proud I am to be an IBEW brother. This is where I’ll stay until retirement. I’m so thankful for the IBEW and all of the good things that come from being a member.”

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

The number of U.S. private-sector workers who joined unions in 2023, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

For more about the rising tide of unionism, see “It’s Our Time” on this page and “More Than a Feeling: 2023 Data Affirms Thriving U.S. Economy, Union Growth” on page 11.
The IEW is urging the renomination and Senate confirmation of Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairman Christopher Hanson following the departure of another commissioner who was a friend of working families and communities that depend on the industry.

Jeff Baran, an advocate for safety and the protection of employees’ rights, left the commission after his tenure ended in June 2023. This left the five-seat commission with four members including Hanson, whose term is up in June.

Baran worked closely with all the nuclear industry’s stakeholders during his nine years on the commission, including organized labor. He regularly met with IBEW members during visits to nuclear facilities and other events. The commission is charged by law to regulate the use of radioactive materials to protect public health and safety and the environment.

“I want to thank Jeff Baran for his work in keeping the nuclear industry safe and for supporting our members, especially in fighting back against attempts to change access authorization,” Utility Director Donnie Colston said. “He was respectful to all the industry’s stakeholders, including the IBEW. He leaves quite a legacy.”

The IBEW has ample reason to be interested in the commission’s make-up. It has more than 10,000 members employed at 65 nuclear reactors in the United States and one in Canada. About 5,000 more construction members work in jobs supported by the nuclear industry. Colston and International President Kenneth W. Cooper meet with Hanson on a quarterly basis to discuss the industry’s issues. “But all too often, they balances on what the industry could achieve in terms of capital investment.”

Colston said the project will provide work to about 2,000 construction members. “These small, modular facilities can be ramped up and ramped down, just like a peaking unit. They’re going to create a lot of jobs for IBEW members using clean energy.”

The NRC agreed — at Hanson’s urging — to reconsider a request for a new license that previously had been made in 2009. That process is ongoing, but the plant will be open well beyond 2026.

“Without that, those workers would be out of a job,” Warren said. “Chairman Hanson protected our members’ jobs with common-sense guidelines that benefited the entire industry.”

Keeping Plants Open

Warren said Hanson has taken a leading role in developing common-sense regulations to help save nuclear plants at risk of closure. That is vitally important because it can take years, perhaps even decades, to close a facility after it has been decommissioned.

The commission has kept open facilities in California, Illinois and Florida where the IBEW represents workers. Warren said Hanson was particularly helpful in keeping open the Diablo Canyon Power Plant, which includes hundreds of employees represented by Vacaville, Calif., Local 1245.

“Without that ability to go to arbitration, there would be no checks and balances on what the industry could do,” Warren added. “They could get rid of people they just don’t like, including for being active in their union.”

Nuclear is a key element in the ongoing transition to clean energy because it is carbon-free, safe and can be accessed at any time. It continues to evolve to the benefit of IBEW members. TerraPower and Pacificorp have applied to the NRC for a permit to construct a NuScale reactor plant on the site of a former coal-fired power plant in Wyoming, the No. 1 coal producing state in the nation.

Colston said the project will provide work to about 2,000 construction members. Once finished, the facility will employ about 320 members. NuScale reactors are smaller and run on different fuel than advanced reactors. Many industry experts believe they will be an effective supplement to carbon-free sources like wind and solar, which haven’t yet proven to be as reliable.

“It doubles our members at that plant from when it was a coal facility,” Colston said. “These small, modular facilities can be ramped up and ramped down, just like a peaking unit. They’re going to create a lot of jobs for IBEW members using clean energy.”

The Chairman’s Track Record

Like Baran, Hanson also has been willing to meet with IBEW members. Toledo, Ohio, Local 245 said that firsthand last summer, when they met with Hanson and Ohio Rep. Marcy Kaptur at the Davis-Besse Nuclear Power Station.

“He showed interest in the well-being of our workforce there,” Business Manager Shane Bauman said. “We talked about safety, reliability and morale.”

Energy Harbor took over ownership of the plant after parent company First Energy emerged from bankruptcy in 2020. It took Local 245, more than a year to negotiate its first successor contract with Energy Harbor, which is now in the process of being sold to Texas-based Vistra Corporation.

“Despite the many challenges during the last few years, our members have maintained a safety conscious attitude and been nothing short of professional,” Bauman said. “I give them all a lot of credit. But [Hanson] recognized we had some legitimate safety issues. He listened and asked some good questions.”

“We took a good feeling from it,” Bauman added. “It was a very positive meeting.”

The NRC is supposed to include five members serving staggered five-year terms, nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate. No more than three can come from the same political party. A prolonged fight over Hanson’s renomination could leave it with just three members, especially if the Senate is slow to act on Baran’s replacement.

Warren said the facts don’t back up the industry’s attacks on the NRC.

“The commission is there to support, not promote, the industry,” Warren said. “They regulate. They’re a technical agency. The industry has its own struggles. It is facing a tremendous amount of challenges in terms of capital investment.”

NRC Chair’s Renomination

With NRC at Crossroad, IBEW Pushes for Chair’s Renomination
A More Perfect Union: Reflections on 50 Years of the Electrical Workers Minority Caucus

Continued from page 1

As the Biden administration continues to invest hundreds of billions of dollars into infrastructure and manufacturing, creating tens of thousands of jobs, the IBEW needs to grow to be equal to this historic moment. Cooper set a goal of 1 million active members in five years.

To fuel part of this growth, the IBEW can look to the EWMC for trained leaders who are primed to bring in the next generation. Locals can let their caucus chapters guide them on where to organize and which communities to go into, and then send those members out to do the recruiting.

"EWMC chapters are a great tool for locals to tap into. Someone of the same race or gender can often have an easier conversation," said Wendell Yee, a New York Local 3 member and adviser to the EWMC board. "People are more open when it's a familiar face."

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RENEW/NextGen, the IBEW's initiative to get younger members involved in the union and train them to be leaders, originated with the EWMC. Sparks in particular saw the need for a way to elevate

the voices of younger members and ensure that they were being heard.

"If we don't listen to our young people, we're going to be lost. They're the next generation," said Edwards, who's also a retired international representative and business manager of Portland, Ore., Local 32B. "There are new ways to approach things that only they're aware of. They think differently. We have to honor that."

Leadership training ties into another tenet of the caucus: mentoring. It's a way to help with retention by letting members know they're valued. It's also crucial for fostering the next generation and passing along institutional knowledge.

"None of us are going to be here forever. We're all just placeholders. Our job is to prepare people to take our place," Edwards said. "It's not fair to the membership to have that knowledge. That's a huge, critical piece, and one that holds back organized labor. It shouldn't be about you. It should be about the membership."

It used to be that institutional knowledge was passed down through the family, or a small group of people. Now, there are more and more first-generation members who may not know all the ins and outs or the trade jargon. Mentoring is a way to teach those rules.

"If you don't mentor, it's baptism by fire for the next person," said EWMC at-large member Sylvester Taylor.

Legacy of Inclusion

As an autonomous organization, the EWMC cannot submit resolutions to the IBEW International Convention. Nevertheless, it has gotten a number of its agenda items passed through locals introducing them. It's how RENEW/NextGen started, as well as IBEW Strong, the union-wide initiative to create more diversity, equity and inclusion in the IBEW, particularly within leadership.

The EWMC also has gotten resolutions and amendments passed to make the constitution gender neutral; to add racism, sexism and fascism to the list of what the IBEW opposes; to make discrimination, bullying and harassment chargeable offenses; and to create a Department of Human Services, which is now the Civic and Community Engagement Department.

"It's been a lot of small chess moves," said Sparks, a retired business manager of Atlanta Local 222. "This is a great union because of real hard effort."

That the IBEW does a Day of Service at its conventions is also a product of the EWMC. Days of service have long been a component of EWMC conferences, which are always held during the week before the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. They are a nod to the EWMC's civil rights roots, but more than that, they are a way to get into underserved communities and give back, all the while dispelling negative myths about unions.

"At King day, anyone can be great because anyone can serve," Edwards said. "It's an investment we make now that will sow benefits down the road. That's the best PR."

For anyone who's curious about the EWMC, there may be no better way to learn than by attending conferences. Open to all members, they're frequently credited with fostering a particularly inviting environment.

"It's a love conference," Sparks said. "We are family. It lets you know you've got brothers and sisters who will check on you constantly. You will never go to a conference and not have someone to talk to."

That sense of love, as well as the social justice drive, is what attracted EWMC past President Victor Uno, who grew up in an activist household.

"When I found the EWMC and met Robbie, she gave me a big embrace and I felt like I'd come home," said the former international representative and business manager of Dublin, Calif., Local 599. "I felt like I belonged. That's the EWMC."

The conferences, through their sessions and increasing numbers of attendees, also offer a lot of opportunities for education.

"I learn something new every time I attend an EWMC conference," said Nashville, Tenn., Local 429 President Kim Sansom, who serves as an at-large member on the EWMC board. "I'm able to network with business managers, presidents and rank-and-file members so I can better understand and continue to learn. That's mentoring."

Part of what the EWMC has been doing is educating members on the need to destigmatize mental health challenges and provide better resources to help members. A conference session on the subject in 2023 went two hours over its scheduled time because so many attendees wanted to share their experiences. A similar session at the annual conference in January was expanded to allow for more participation.

"People are hurting," said Rayetta Sanford, the first Black woman to hold the position of director of the International-Neuropsychology Fellowship, when she took the helm of the newly formed Human Services Department. "They bared their souls and shared their anguish. Some even cried. It was unbelievable."

Sanford and Edwards both point to insurance plans, and awareness about how they offer, as a way for unions to help. In particular, plans should provide access to therapists who represent the membership wherever possible.
EWMC Mission Statement

- Promote equity, equal opportunity and employment for minorities and underrepresented workers at all levels of the IBEW structure.

- Foster leadership development and empower minorities and underrepresented workers to become active participants and leaders in the IBEW.

- Provide assistance to and address discrimination complaints of minorities and underrepresented workers in the IBEW.

- Promote, support and assist the organizing of minority and underrepresented workers in the IBEW.

- Encourage minority and underrepresented workers to be greater activists in community and political affairs.

- Be actively involved in human, civil and women’s rights organizations both within and outside of organized labor.

* African Americans, Asian and Pacific Islander Americans, Latino Americans, Native Americans, people with disabilities and women
Legislative staffers in Oregon did the unprecedented when they organized an IBEW bargaining unit in 2021, the first — and still only — union of its kind at any state capitol. Now they’ve made history again by ratifying a first contract.

It took nearly two years once talks started, but the Seattle Local 89 members emerged with an agreement that gives them new clout in a workplace where opinions, egos and power plays run rampant.

While lawmakers in both parties resisted the union during the organizing drive, tensions eased at the table. Members of the IBEW’s bipartisan bargaining team said the dialogue was amiable overall, despite the drawn-out process.

“They’re concerned for our safety,” said Claire Prihoda, a longtime aide who took part in negotiations. “We all knew that this was a challenging workplace.”

The biggest hurdle for both sides was the blank slate in front of them.

“There is so much to this group that’s unique and never been done before,” Local 89 organizer Justin Roberts said, describing a complicated mix of job durations, classifications and office structure among the state’s 60 House members and 30 senators.

Some staffers are full-time and year-round, some part-time, some temporary and employed only when the Legislature is in session in Salem — up to 160 days in odd-numbered years and just 35 days in between, he explained. Some aides work for multiple lawmakers; some are their boss’s spouse or child or other relation.

“We had to figure out, are we looking at 90 different bargaining units or is this one bargaining unit with 90 managers?” Roberts said.

The contract affirmed the Legislature itself as the employer with lawmakers effectively first-level managers, still having leeway to run their offices as they see fit, but with more rights and protections for their employees.

“I feel really good about it,” Prihoda said. “It’s a partisan staff, and that’s not an easy group to build harmony around. We’re often at odds in our jobs. But Democrat or Republican, we’re all dealing with the same issues at work.”

Specific gains include a 6.5% raise, $5,000 lump sum, a grievance procedure, clarity on overtime eligibility and travel costs, and seats on the Capitol’s safety and wellness committee.

“What we heard from aides was, ‘We’re working in this environment that brings a lot of emotion and a lot of controversy and we upset people, we make people mad — unintentionally — and we’re concerned for our safety,’” Roberts said.

The Legislature on its own stepped up security in the building during the pandemic, taking care of some of the issues aides were raising. Going forward, the unit will have a say in such decisions.

Roberts said the biggest sticking point at the table involved lawmakers wanting to exclude high-level aides as confidential employees. “We went round and round and round and round,” he said, explaining that the state Employment Relations Board had ruled that all legislative aides — classified as LA 1, 2, 3 or 4 — are eligible for the bargaining unit.

Ultimately, the union agreed that a lawmaker could designate, in writing, one LA 4 employee as exempt. “It was a big deal for us because the LA 4s are the most consistent and longest-tenured aides, and they are critical to the bargaining unit,” Roberts said. “But without that piece of it, we wouldn’t have had an agreement.”

Legislative staffs by nature are transient, full of young people cutting their political teeth for several years and moving on. Even seasoned aides come and go: Roberts said the size of the unit can range from 90 aides in off months to 180 or more when the Legislature is in session.

Local IBEW Business Manager Richard Murray said the local is committed to the “hard work of building the unit” despite the turnover. “There’s a lot of pride in being the first union ever to negotiate a contract for legislative aides,” he said. “It’s quite an accomplishment, but we're not done.”

His eclectic local is experienced in helping smaller shops succeed, representing such units as funeral directors, workers who manufacture micro-layers of gold, and a news outlet focusing on homelessness and social justice. “If there’s a group of workers out there that needs help, that needs a voice, we’re here to help them,” Murray said.

Over time, Roberts envisions a robust unit with stewards throughout the Capitol and has creative ideas to spur growth. For instance, posters with QR codes on union bulletin boards, something new staffers might see before the unit even has their names.

At times he has fielded calls from legislative workers around the country who want a union. Organizing drives have been launched in a handful of states, including Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire and Washington, but lawmakers have stood in their way.

Given that, Roberts noted the irony of what the Oregon unit achieved. “It’s very interesting to negotiate a contract with a group that can take away your right to negotiate a contract,” he said.

The agreement has a short life, expiring with the 99th Legislature at the end of the year. The bargaining team, which includes four members split between the parties and chambers — two from the House and two from the Senate — could be back at the table by June.

Roberts is the first to say the 2023 agreement isn’t perfect. “Far from it,” he said. “But we felt it was the best deal we could get two years into the process, and something is better than nothing.”

The contract’s preamble alone is important, he stressed, stating a mutual desire for a “constructive, cooperative, and respectful relationship.”

With that in mind and a fresh round of talks coming up, Prihoda is hopeful for genuine change in the Capitol’s culture — evolving into a workplace where lawmakers are more sensitive to the demands they make of employees and more aware of their responsibilities to them.

She pointed to legislators’ varying and ambiguous approaches to compensation for overtime and travel, citing occasions when aides spend hours driving to far-flung districts to assist with town hall. Some were assured extra pay and reimbursement; others weren’t.

Now, with rules spelled out in a union contract, Prihoda said, the unit intends to hold legislators accountable.

“It’s much more out in the open now, what rights and responsibilities we have in our workplace,” she said. “We’re able to lean on each other and reinforce that we can advocate for ourselves and each other.”

She sees the contract as a win for all involved — a rarity in a Statehouse.

“We believe that having professional staff that has stability and growth and can sort of breathe easier will be better at supporting members, regardless of party, and will build a Legislature that can provide consistent, professional services for all of Oregon,” Prihoda said.
Ford Motor Co.’s Blue Oval City, a $6 billion, six-square-mile electric vehicle and battery manufacturing campus in western Tennessee — part of which is shown in this artist’s rendering — is said to be the biggest project in the history of the company end of Memphis, Tenn., Local 474.

Ford Motor Co.’s Blue Oval City project in western Tennessee is one of the biggest expansions of U.S. automaking in decades, it’s also turning into a golden opportunity for Memphis Local 474 to welcome hundreds of new men and women into the IBEW.

“We’ve recruited 700 new members since January 2023, and we still have open calls every day,” said Local 474 Business Manager Noel Sherman. “It’s been like drinking water from a fire hose.”

Blue Oval City, which broke ground in 2020, is consistently described in superlatives. Ford calls the $6 billion, six-square-mile electric vehicle and battery manufacturing campus its largest ever undertaking. It’s been labeled the biggest commercial construction project in Tennessee history. And it’s said to be the largest project to land in Local 474’s jurisdiction since the IBEW approved its charter in 1906.

Ford estimates that 6,000 workers, including hundreds of IBEW members, will be required to get the 17-building campus fully up and running by the end of 2025. The centerpiece of this car makes its own batteries, as well as Ford and Walbridge, the site’s general contractor.

“Our partnerships with contractors are like we’ve never seen before because the need is so great,” Sherman said. “It’s a great place to be.”

Meanwhile, recruiting efforts for new IBEW members never stop, he said. Everyone at Local 474 understands that Blue Oval City is an opportunity to show Ford — and others — how the union and its signatory contractors are more than capable of meeting the automaker’s needs while offering near-immediate employment to a highly trained workforce, with wages and benefits better than those advertised by nonunion contractors.

The drastic growth in Local 474’s membership — in 2020, the figure hovered around 3,500 — is also helping to boost interest in its state-of-the-art JATC.

“We had our largest first-year apprenticeship class this past year,” Sherman said. With a similar influx of candidates expected for 2024, “we’re looking at acquiring more space and maybe doing some things a little differently.”

Although plenty of Local 474’s members are working a standard 40-hour schedule there, “lots of contractors are running 10 hours a day, seven days a week,” Sherman said.

There’s no end in sight for Blue Oval City after principal construction is finished. Scores of IBEW members will be needed to stick around to handle the maintenance work at the massive facility. And in the coming years, Ford is planning to produce other electric vehicles there, as well as their batteries.

There should be plenty of other job opportunities for workers who move to greater Memphis, with thousands of potential Ford-related supplier jobs in parts manufacturing and other logistics needs.

“The area’s gonna change, a lot,” Sherman said, adding that future developments are also in the early planning stages for more Stanton-area housing, hotels and restaurants.

“This is just a very exciting time for the IBEW in western Tennessee,” said Tenth District International Vice President Brent Hall, whose jurisdiction includes the state. “The Blue Oval City project can only help our whole union grow by allowing us to offer lots of opportunities for new and experienced members. “It’s giving the Local 474 and Tenth District a chance to share with the rest of the union what this area has to offer,” Hall added.

Sherman agreed. ‘We’ve got this opportunity, and we’re going to do our very best.”
Baltimore Local Works on Clearing the Way for More Data Center Jobs in Maryland

Data center construction and maintenance jobs have become mainstays for thousands of IBEW members across North America over the last several years. In Maryland, Baltimore Local 24 Business Manager Michael McHale is working hard to keep bringing as much of that work as possible into his state. “Every morning, thousands of Maryland residents — many of them IBEW members — travel into Virginia to work in that state’s thriving data center industry,” McHale said. “Needless to say, these men and women would rather be working closer to home in our state.”

Data centers have become a necessity in an era when instant online access to software, documents and media files is critical. Technology companies keep investing in data center growth and redundancy because program access lags or downtime could send their customers to competitors.

“Our highly trained electrical workers are the best qualified to install and maintain the power lines and protection systems data centers need to stay on 24/7, as well as the numerous racks of servers and routers that go inside,” said Fourth District Business Manager and Local 24 Business Manager Rodney Rice, left, and Baltimore Local 24 Business Manager Michael McHale, right, regularly discuss job prospects for IBEW members with elected officials at all levels of government, such as Rep. David Trone of Maryland, center.

“One spot in the county that’s been identified through 2037 — at least 500 of which would be new — could generate 3,000 construction jobs a year to ensure that the client threatened to walk away from the project. To help remove such potential roadblocks in future situations, a measure quickly proposed by Maryland Gov. Wes Moore — and still moving through the General Assembly as this story went to press — aims to make it easier for data centers, as well as hospitals and hotels, to install modern backup generators.

“When the bill makes it through, data center jobs will really take off,” McHale said. The Maryland Tech Council estimated that data center construction and maintenance at the EastAlco site alone could generate 3,000 construction jobs a year through 2017 — at least 500 of which would be filled by IBEW members, he said — along with another 2,000 or so long-term construction jobs that would be generated by the thousands of long-term data center jobs supported by these incentives and tax exemptions.

“Getting that and similar worker-friendly legislation passed is why solidifying Local 24’s relationships with elected officials at all levels remains a priority,” McHale said.

“For too many years, the IBEW let other people decide our fate,” he said. “Now we have a seat at the table. ... We’re working hard to get the Local 24 name out there,” McHale said, noting that his local is on three of Maryland’s five central labor councils. “We’re using every tool in our toolbox. “

“Getting that and similar worker-friendly legislation passed is why solidifying Local 24’s relationships with elected officials at all levels remains a priority,” McHale said.

“The Building Trades National Medical Screening Program’s concerns and diligence are appreciated for the future well-being of our members and retirees.”

Dennis Stahl
IBEW Local 61 (Rocky Flats)
Former Business Manager

“Building Trades National Medical Screening Program (BTMed)

Did you work construction on a Department of Energy (DOE) site?

You may be eligible for a free medical screening exam to test for health conditions that may be work related.

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TO ENROLL, CALL 1-800-866-9663 OR VISIT www.btmed.org

*BTMed is a project of the Department of Energy’s Office of Workforce Programs and is administered by CPWR—The Center for Construction Research and Training, the health and safety trade council of the Building Trades Unions, with support from the state Building and Construction Trades Councils. Funding from the Department of Energy (DE-FC01-06ER46305).
The Ontario provincial government announced plans to invest nearly $43 million in skilled trades training, much of which is expected to be directed to the IBEW’s local union training centers in the province.

The announcement was made during an event at Toronto Local 353 on Dec. 11. The local has launched a project to prepare 48 young people from historically underrepresented groups in the Toronto area for careers in the electrical industry.

The free program includes a four-month boot camp to train them in essential skills and safety, followed up by a 10-week job placement with a signatory contractor.

First District International Vice President Russ Shewchuk credited the IBEW Construction Council of Ontario for having the vision and courage to work with the party in power and find mutually beneficial areas. The Progressive Conservatives have controlled the provincial government since 2018.

In Ontario, one of those areas of common interest is building a construction workforce to meet growing infrastructure demands.

“We need more young people to know university isn’t the only path to success in life,” said David Piccini, Ontario’s minister of labour, immigration, training and skills development.

Shewchuk pledged that the IBEW will do everything it can to prepare young people for opportunities in the electrical industry.

“When faced with the challenge of losing the value of their members’ trade licenses, coupled with a new Progressive Conservative government taking over that was historically anti-labour, the IBEW’s leadership in Ontario could have given up,” he said.

“Instead, they decided to think outside the box and worked to establish a relationship with a non-traditional ally.”

The provincial government said in a news release that the training program will allow about 18,000 additional young people to explore careers in the trades. There is a construction boom in Ontario, where additional skilled construction workers are needed to build out hospitals, transit systems and 1.5 million homes by 2031.

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The Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program will receive about $22.5 million, and the IBEW hopes to partner with the high schools. The program gives high school students who have finished grade 10 increased exposure through cooperative education courses.

The IBEW construction locals in Ontario have received $43.8 million in funding since 2020. The money has helped the IBEW and other unionized trades improve their training and recruitment programs, but the IBEW in Ontario is calling on the provincial government to better enforce the restricted trade license and maintain its value.

The previous Liberal-led government declassified the electrical trade license to a skill set and competency model instead of viewing it as part of a restricted trade scope, where the emphasis is on licenses and skills for safety for the public as well as the tradeperson.

After much political lobbying, the Conservatives introduced legislation that reestablished the restricted status of the electrical license in Ontario, but IBEW leaders in the province say it hasn’t been enforced adequately.

James Barry, executive secretary/treasurer of the council, believes that the work to build relationships with the Progressive Conservatives is paying off, including the rapport he has established with Minister Piccini.

“Protecting our trade license is paramount in all sectors,” he said.

“When the unorganized electrical journeypersons and apprentices see the leader of the IBEW Construction Council of Ontario having a strong voice for the trade and their livelihood, it makes them think about the advantages of joining our great union.”

“We will continue to urge the government to better enforce the trade license on behalf of our members,” Shewchuk said. “We applaud the financial commitment they have provided to our locals to allow us to continue finding new ways to work together to strengthen our training and recruitment programs.”

Le gouvernement de l’Ontario aïde la FIOE à donner des formations

L’Ontario IBEW Uses Provincial Funding to Improve Training, Recruitment

Le gouvernement provincial ontarien a annoncé l’intention d’investir environ 61 millions de dollars dans la formation des métiers spécialisés, dont une grande partie devrait être accordée dans les centres de formation des sections locales de la FIOE dans la province.

La section locale 353 à Toronto a fait l’annonce lors d’un événement le 11 décembre. Le local a lancé un projet qui vise à préparer 48 jeunes appartenant à des groupes historiquement sous-représentés dans la région de Toronto à faire carrière dans l’industrie électrique.

Le programme gratuit comprend une formation de quatre mois fondée sur les compétences fondamentales et la sécurité. Par la suite, un programme de placement de dix semaines est offert avec un entrepreneur signataire.

Le vice-président international du premier district, Russ Shewchuk, a félicité le Conseil de la construction de l’Ontario et les sections locales d’avoir vu plus loin, d’avoir le courage de travailler avec le parti au pouvoir et de trouver des domaines d’intérêts mutuellement bénéfiques. Les progressistes-conservateurs gouvernent la province depuis 2018.

«Lorsqu’ils se trouvaient confrontés à perdre la valeur du certificat de qualification de leur membre, en plus du nouveau gouvernement progressiste-conservateur, qui est depuis toujours antisyndical, le leadership de la FIOE en Ontario aurait pu baisser les bras, » a exprimé Shewchuk.

«Ils ont plutôt décidé de sortir des sentiers battus et ont fait l’effort d’établir un lien avec un allié non traditionnel, » ajoute Shewchuk.

Le gouvernement provincial a annoncé lors d’un communiqué que le financement supplémentaire permettra à environ 18 000 jeunes de plus d’environ 21,5 millions de dollars et la FIOE espère collaborer avec les écoles secondaires. Ce programme donne la chance au corps étudiant, qui a terni son secondaire 4, d’explorer les métiers spécialisés grâce à des cours d’éducation coopérative.

Les sections locales du secteur de la construction de la FIOE en Ontario ont reçu 43,8 millions de dollars en financement depuis 2020. Ce montant, en grande partie, provenait du gouvernement provincial, bien que le gouvernement fédéral a accordé 5,9 millions de dollars dans le cadre du Programme de formation et d’innovation en milieu syndical.

Cet argent a aidé la FIOE et d’autres métiers syndiqués à améliorer leurs programmes de formation et de recrutement. Cependant, la FIOE en Ontario demande au gouvernement provincial de mieux faire appliquer le certificat de qualification et de conserver sa valeur.

Le gouvernement précédent dirigeé par le Parti libéral a déclassifié le certificat de qualification d’électricien en échange d’un modèle fondé sur les acquis au lieu de le considérer comme un métier encadré, d’où l’objectif premier du certificat consiste à la compétence et la sécurité pour le public ainsi que pour la personne de métier.

Après de nombreuses pressions politiques, les conservateurs ont adopté une mesure législative qui rétablit le statut encadré du certificat en électricité en Ontario, mais les leaders de la FIOE dans la province disent qu’il n’a pas été appliqué de manière adéquate.

«Nous avons besoin de faire comprendre que les leaders du Conseil de la construction de l’Ontario demandent au gouvernement provincial de mieux respecter le certificat au nom de nos membres dans le public », a déclaré David Piccini.

«Entre-temps, nous allons trouver des moyens pour travailler ensemble dans le but d’améliorer nos programmes de formation, »

James Barry, le secrétaire exécutif/trésorier du Conseil, a fait part qu’il a été établi des relations avec le gouvernement progressiste-conservateur, il a commencé à porter fruit, il a émis des liens avec Piccini.

« Propulser nos certificats de qualification dans tous les secteurs est d’une importance supréme, » dit-il. «Lorsque des compagnons et des apprentis non syndiqués constatent que les leaders du Conseil de la construction de la FIOE sont d’ardents défenseurs des métiers et de leur moyen de subsistance, ça les pousse à penser aux avantages d’adhérer à notre grand syndicat. »

www.IBEW.org
Detroit Local Powers First EV Charging Road in North America

A stretch of road in downtown Detroit can now wirelessly charge electric vehicles — a first in North America — and it’s thanks in part to members of Detroit Local 58.

“This project speaks to our skill set and grasp of the groundbreaking technology,” said Local 58 Business Representative Byron Osbern. “When our customer needed this done, they knew to call on us.”

The road, about a mile from Local 58’s hall, uses rubber-coated copper inductive-charging coils buried under the asphalt that transfer power to a receiver pad attached to a car’s underbody, much like how a phone can be charged wirelessly. The charging, which does not affect pedestrians or wildlife, can power an electric car whether it’s parked (called static charging) or moving (dynamic charging).

The road itself, about a quarter-mile long, looks like any other road and can be used by other cars.

Local 58 members provided field supervision and new electrical service to power the equipment, which came from startup company Electreon. They worked on installation of the distribution equipment, cable installation and termination, as well as the coils below the road and the charging-system cables.

It was a project that took a lot of coordination and planning, said Raubsort Electric Project Manager Chris Korte. The conduit runs needed to be exact for the small-coil trenches and pre-cut charging cables that run from the road to the management system. The final day, which began at 4 a.m., was unique as it entailed installing 180 coils and pulling and terminating all the charging cables before any of the work road could start.

“It all needed to be done that day,” Korte said. “System layout was critical.”

The project took about two months and finished at the end of November. As often happens in the upper Midwest, the schedule was affected by inclement weather, but the crews completed everything on time.

“The IBEW played a pivotal role, from building the electrical infrastructure to meeting project timelines and providing all the heavy lifting on the final day,” Korte said.

The stretch of road, a part of 14th Street in the Motor City’s Corktown neighborhood, will be used to test the new technology in real-world conditions. Using a Ford E-Transit electric commercial van provided by Ford Motor Co. and equipped with the Electreon technology, staff will test the efficiency and operations of the vehicle and study potential long-term public transportation opportunities.

The Michigan Department of Transportation is seeking bids to rebuild part of another road, U.S. 12, or Michigan Avenue, which will also have inductive charging installed. Osbern said Local 58 is a front-runner for that project, as well.

“The buzz around Detroit has been the renaissance of the Motor City as an electric vehicle hub, and this is one more piece of it,” Osbern said. “It’s been cool to watch us evolve.”

Wireless charging, which is also being tested by Electreon in Europe, Israel and China, could be a boon for the EV car market by combating the “range anxiety” that some drivers experience on long trips if they’re not near a charging station. It’s also promising for public transit and commercial transportation like delivery vans and long-haul trucks. A vehicle that can charge on the go can use a smaller and cheaper battery without losing time at a charging station.

While this type of technology is new, IBEW members working on such an innovation is not. The Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Training Program, which has trained thousands of members in EV charging, is the preferred training program of the Biden administration, which has invested billions of dollars in EV infrastructure.

“IBEW Local 58 has shown our innovation and proven our forward thinking by cornering the market on EVITP-trained workers since the mid-2000s. Now it’s our turn to show off the skill, ability and knowledge we possess,” Business Manager Paul VanBiss said. “When Detroit needs to electrify, our members are standing at the ready with tools and talent.”

Smoke Detector Blitz: Local 98 Partners With Firefighters to Save Lives

More than 150 families in a Philadelphia suburb found out what the IBEW stands for when they opened their doors to find teams of electricians and firefighters ready and eager to make sure every home had working smoke detectors.

As they’re done for years on the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, apprentice and journeyman volunteers from Philadelphia Local 98 joined the Norristown, Pa., Fire Department for a smoke-detector blitz Jan. 15, fanning out in an assigned neighborhood to check devices and install new ones wherever needed.

“It’s a great way for us to be out in our communities, helping people and showing them what the IBEW is all about,” said Jason Cary, a Local 98 business agent who led the union’s team of volunteers, all sporting IBEW shirts.

Cary said nearly everyone welcome volunteers into their homes, where they chatted with excited children about fire safety and with curious teenagers and young adults about becoming an IBEW apprentice.

“It’s putting a good face on the union but also expanding our reach,” said Local 98 Political Director Tom Lep- ers, who coordinates the local’s end of the project. “Almost every time I’ve done this, I get asked about the IBEW and ‘How do I apply?’”

Dedicated to a local 12-year-old boy who died in a house fire in 2006, the MLK Day blitz draws a variety of vol- untees, who this year included students and unionized teachers. Norris- town Fire Chief Tom O’Donnell is outwardly grateful to all of them.

But he said the department’s bonds with the IBEW are especially strong, praising Local 98’s insuable help with the blitz and beyond — installing emergency lighting at a community center, for instance, and what he described as spectacular work over-hauling substation lighting at Montgomery County’s memorial to fallen firefighters.

“It’s longstanding, going back to when it was Local 360, before they were part of local 58,” O’Donnell said, refer- ring to a 2015 merger. “They’re unsung heroes. They’re not doing it for notori- ety. They work behind the scenes, using their skill set to make things better than they found them.”

Those skills can come in handy during the blitz, he said, with electricians able to check out any wiring issues that interfere with replacing or installing alarms.

Local 98’s contributions extend to providing supplies and many of the detectors — the double-duty variety, their ear-piercing shrieks alerting to not only smoke but also carbon monoxide.

“They show up with smoke detec- tors and step ladders and other equip- ment, and they even buy lunch,” O’Donnell said. “Their generosity and other donations from the community make the blitz possible.”

The project focuses on low-income neighborhoods in Norristown, a suburb 20 miles northwest of Philadel- phia. Studies show that households below the poverty line are most likely to have only one smoke detector. And it may or may not be working, a problem across income levels.

“At a minimum, we make sure there is at least one smoke alarm on every sin- gle level of a home,” O’Donnell said.

An estimated 20% of American homes have broken detectors or units disabled by residents, often when smoke from the oven or stove triggers the alarm.

The consequences can be deadly.

The National Fire Protection Association reports that three out of every five deaths in house fires are due to the absence of working smoke detectors, an average of 1,400 fatalities annually.

Local 98 Business Manager Mark Lynch said the Philadelphia area has had its share of such tragedies, inspir- ing IBEW volunteers not only in Norris- town but also to accompany Philadelphia firefighters on similar missions.

“We get involved in all sorts of activities — food pantries, cleaning up parks, you name it,” Lynch said. “But the opportunity to help our local fire departments get working smoke detec- tors in every home means we could be saving someone’s life,” he said.

“They show up with smoke detectors and step ladders and other equipment. ... Their generosity and other donations from the community make the blitz possible.”

— Norristown, Pa., Fire Chief Tom O’Donnell on Local 98’s MLK Day blitz.

Lynch and Lepers said going door to door in a struggling neighbor- hood also gives volunteers, especially apprentices, perspective.

“You realize how important your union is to you, how fortunate you are to be part of the IBEW and what is has provided for you and family," said Lep- ers, a lifelong Norristown resident and president of its Municipal Council.

Along the way, volunteers didn’t hesitate to talk about their good for- tune with anyone showing interest in the IBEW.

“They are very impressed when they ask about how much money we make and our benefits,” Cary said. “But they’re also impressed by the IBEW’s inclusivity and how we help people in the area.

“I tell them that if they were to join the union, they’d have the opportunity to come out and help the community with us.”

Local 98 volunteers helped firefighters in a Philadelphia suburb install smoke detectors on MLK Day.
POLITICS & JOBS

IBEW Training Is Key as Federal EV Charger Push Intensifies

In January, the Biden administration announced an additional $625 million in federal funding to build electric vehicle charging stations across the country. This was on top of the more than $7 billion invested as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which was signed into law in 2021. It also served as a reminder for IBEW members to receive the proper training so they are ready for these projects.

“Thousands, if not millions, of these charging stations are going to be installed to meet demand,” Construction and Maintenance Director Matt Paults said. “We need to do that work.”

Indeed, White House Climate Advisor Ali Zaidi mentioned the Brotherhood during a call with reporters alongside Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg.

“When those chargers go into the ground, we’ve got the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers – good paying union jobs being spurred in communities from coast to coast – to do the work.”

Members got an inside track at building the emerging EV network when the Transportation Department recommended in 2022 that the Brotherhood’s Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Training Program serve as the preferred national training standard. The program had been in existence for nearly 10 years and was developed by the IBEW in conjunction with its signatory contractors and other industry partners.

In some areas of the country, the demands of those signatory contractors will put even more emphasis on IBEW members performing the work.

Jacksonville, Fla., Local 277 Business Manager Alan Jones noted that Miller Electric, which is based in Jacksonville but is a leading signatory in the region, wants to have a much of the country, wants to have a much larger share of the market.

“Miller Electric is going after the work,” Jones said. “As the industry grows and our members performing the work, they’re not going to throw money after nothing.”

“I see all the potential,” Jones added. “The IBEW is ahead of something else instead of chasing it. Sometimes, it seems like when new technology is out, we’re chasing it. I want to see our guys doing this work instead of the unrepresented electrical worker.”

In California, one of the leading states in the transition to electric vehicles, San Diego Local 569 members trained in the EVITP program are installing chargers at several stations, including the Chula Vista Metropolitan Transit Service Facility and Kaiser Permanente San Diego Medical Center.

Boston Local 103 landed about $95 million in EV-related work in 2023, ranging from local and state government cars to dealerships to private homes, Business Manager Lou Antonelli said.

“That’s a decent amount of work, and it runs the whole gamut of projects,” said Antonelli, who expects that work to continue to grow.

Rod Zink, director of business development for White Electrical, an Atlanta-based signatory, said the company’s work on charging stations has increased steadily since it signed up as a partner at EVITP.org in 2021. Recently, White has begun taking on larger installation projects instead of ones that required just one or two charging stations.

Zink, whose company has operations in six southern states, said the demand will only continue. Being part of the EVITP program has made White more visible in the industry, he said.

“It’s the source of many opportunities,” said Zink, who said he signed up for the program at the suggestion of Terry Reynolds, a Fifth District international representative for business development. “I’ve had many people call me and say, ‘We found your contact information off this site.’”

Those former associates also have helped White make inroads into other forms of clean energy, particularly solar.

“The EV business is obviously going to continue growing,” he said. “The great thing we’ve found is that the contractors or consultants we’ve met who are involved in this are pretty loyal. If they have that work, we win the work.”

Members can sign up for the training at their local’s Joint Apprentice Training Center or Electrical Training Alliance centers. Training also is available online. Members, contractors and other industry partners also can go to EVITP.org.

There are about 165,000 EV chargers in the U.S., Zaidi told reporters in January. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act calls for 500,000 to be built by 2030.

EV sales in the U.S. have quadrupled to 1 million per year since Biden took office in 2021, the administration said.

“We’re at a moment now where the electric vehicle revolution isn’t coming,” Buttigieg said. “It’s very much here.”

While progress has been made, it’s a revolution that IBEW leadership encourages members to play a huge part in, especially as new work rolls in.

“We want to do that work, and we should be doing that work,” Pauls said. “As the industry grows and our signatory contractors continue to bid on it, we have to have a trained workforce ready to do so.”

More Than a Feeling: 2023 Data Affirms Thriving U.S. Economy, Union Growth

The numbers tell the story: Nearly 200,000 new union members in 2023; Contract victories with double-digit raises for nearly 1 million workers. Soaring support for unions, with favorable feedback from 70% of poll respondents overall and a whopping 81% of young people.

America’s unions have more momentum than they’ve had in decades, spurred by a booming economy, millions of new jobs, and a pro-union, pro-growth White House whose policies are making it all possible.

“In my IBEW career, there has never been so much progress on so many fronts so swiftly,” International President Ken W. Cooper said.

“The Biden administration’s strategies are paying off beyond our wildest dreams — and our dreams were already pretty big,” he said. “Infrastructure, technology, manufacturing, growing the economy, creating good union jobs, expanding workers’ rights — President Joe Biden is succeeding at all of that and more.”

Data released in late January affirms those achievements. The economy grew by 3.1% in 2023, shocking many economists, who’d predicted a downturn after 4.5% growth was recorded in 2022.

The chief economist at Moody’s Analytics, which advises businesses and investors, had nothing but praise for the 2023 numbers in an interview with The Washington Post.

“It’s just a perfect report: strong growth and low inflation,” Mark Zandi said. “Everything contributed to growth: consumers, businesses, government, housing, trade, inventories. All of the economic wheels were moving in the same direction.”

Meanwhile, the U.S. Labor Department reported that 191,000 people joined unions in 2023, for a net gain after attrition of 35,000 members. Growth was especially strong among young workers and people of color, with representation for Black workers up 13.1%.

Most media coverage, however, struck a negative tone, leaving out vital context and spinning the fresh data to suggest that unionization is on the decline.

“Unions are growing, full stop,” Cooper said.

The fallacy involves union density. As a percentage of the total workforce, unionized workers are down by a tiny fraction — a result of the exploding job market, not a sign of decline.

“We’re talking about 7.5 million new jobs in the past two years, a pace faster than the labor movement’s been able to keep up with,” Cooper said, stressing that the IBEW and fellow unions are working as fast as they can to close the gap.

AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler, an IBEW sister out of Portland, Ore., Local 125, echoed that commitment.

The Union Difference

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More good numbers from 2023: Data on median earnings show 15.9% higher pay, or $173 more a week, for union versus nonunion workers.

The Electrical Worker | March 2024
POLITICS & JOBS continued

“Organizing is happening at a rate not seen in generations, and new federal investments by the Biden administration in emerging sectors of the economy are creating more opportunities for workers to attain good union jobs,” Shuler said.

She also applauded the historic 2023 strikes by health care workers, autoworkers, screenwriters and actors, and scores of smaller walkouts that also led to substantial gains. “Some 900,000 union members secured double-digit wage increases in their new contracts,” she said. “That’s the power of solidarity.”

Even without contract battles, unionized workers are pocketing more money than those without representation, as wage data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics confirmed again in 2023. On the union side, wages were 25.9% higher than at nonunion workplaces. That translated to median weekly earnings of $1,265 versus $990 for nonunion workers.

Americans are paying attention, with polls showing that 60 million workers would join a union if given the opportunity. Roughly seven out of 10 people polled say they support unions, with approval among young people flirt ing with 80%.

Positive data and polls aren’t the only measurement of labor’s new clout. From Day One of the Biden administration, policies, executive orders, legislation and pro-worker appointments to key positions have made a night-and-day difference.

“The administration is consulting us and listening to us — particularly the IBEW, but also labor at large — more than any past White House, even the friendliest ones,” said Austin Keyser, assistant to the international president for government affairs.

“In less than two years, we met every original goal we set in our policy playbook when President Biden took office,” he said. “It’s not just that we pushed the $1 trillion Bipartis an Infrastructure Law and other record funding packages. He and our allies in Congress insisted that unprecedented funding packages. He and our allies in Congress insisted that unprecedented

Long-Distance Transmission

In 1933, President Roosevelt created the National Power Policy Committee, which was tasked with researching the logistics of a national electrical grid system. One of the committee’s first proposals was to construct a long-distance transmission line that would connect the Hoover Dam near Las Vegas to Los Angeles, a distance of 270 miles.

A project of this scope had never been attempted, and various experts were brought in to consult on its design. Statisticians analyzed data on population growth and electrical demand. Material experts from Stanford University fabricated conductors and insulation capable of carrying 275,000 volts. Electrical engineers designed switching stations that could swap out these high-voltage lines when faulted.

But when ground broke in 1934, it was members of Los Angeles Local 18 that had the honor of installing the country’s first long-distance, high-voltage transmission tower, taking the first step toward a national grid.

Nuclear Power

In 1954, ground broke on the world’s first full-scale civilian-use nuclear power station in Shippingport, Pa. For three years, the construction and installation of this revolutionary power plant was performed by members of Beaver, Pa., Local 712. The reactor reached criticality in December 1957 and began sending 62,000 kilowatts of electricity to the Pittsburgh area.

On May 26, 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower dedicated the power station and, by remote control from the White House, opened the main throttle value sending power to Allegheny and Beaver counties. Transmission was overseen by Pittsburgh Local 142 members at the Duquesne Light Co.

Wind Power

In 1979, the U.S. Department of Energy began partnering with industry groups to develop utility-scale wind turbines. As part of this effort, two models were tested outside Medicine Bow, Wyo., in 1981. One was built by Boeing that could produce 2 megawatts, while the other could produce 4 MW and was built by Hamilton Standard.

Members of Casper, Wyo., Local 322 were responsible for constructing the first turbine tower and installing the blades. Another facet of the experiment was to see which design was better suited for a future 100-MW wind farm, a concept that was years away at the time but is commonplace for IBEW members today.

Solar Power

In 1981, the Department of Energy completed a pilot project for solar thermal energy called SolarOne in the Mojave Desert. Having demonstrated the viability of this alternative energy source, the IBEW was called to build the first utility-scale solar farm in Hesperia, Calif., called Aro Solar. Construction began in 1982 with members of San Luis Obispo Local 639. The farm was completed in 1984, and became the first commercial solar power farm in the U.S.

Electric Vehicles

In 1967, Electric Fuel Propulsion Inc. of Detroit unveiled an electric vehicle that was far ahead of its time — the MARS II. The Arizona Public Service Co. purchased one of the cars and put it to the test with the first ever cross-country EV trip.

The MARS II left Detroit that September and crossed nine states, making 36 recharging stops on the 2,226-mile journey to Arizona. It consumed 1,074 kilowatt-hours, which, based on the residential rate of 2.53 cents per kWh at the time, equated to $27.17 for the trip, or about 1 cent per mile.

A month after departing, it crossed the finish line in Phoenix, where it was greeted by members of Local 387 who were brought in to inspect the car and test some of its revolutionary electronics. The car was powered by 220-volt lead-acid batteries and had a maximum speed of 60 mph and a range of 70 to 120 miles per charge. Similar to EVs of today, the MARS II was capable of fast charging, reaching 80% of battery capacity in 10 minutes and 100% in 90 minutes.

The economic and environmental benefits of electric cars were clear. Unfortunately, the lack of a reliable network of charging stations was a major stumbling block that prevented their adoption. Thankfully, with the passage of President Joe Biden’s Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the IBEW is changing that.

Using the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Training Program developed by NECA and the IBEW, our members have been tasked with installing a national network of 500,000 charging stations by 2030. Once again, because of our extensive training and expertise, the members of the IBEW remain at the forefront of technology.

From the 1st Transmission Line to the 500,000th Charging Station

Since its inception at the dawn of the power industry, IBEW has constantly reinvented itself to be at the forefront of technology. The members are the most highly skilled workers in their field because of continuous training in the latest advancements in power distribution. And when it comes to alternative and renewable sources of energy, the IBEW has been witness to their evolution every step of the way.

Here are just a few examples of IBEW members bringing new technologies to life:

GROUNDED IN HISTORY

Herb Peetle, business manager of Local 387, Phoenix, Ariz., and Ken Houd, employee relations manager of APS, inspect the Mars II electric auto which APS drove across country.

Visit ibew-ibewmuseum.org for more on how to support the IBEW’s preservation of its history. Have an idea for this feature? Send it to Curtis_Bateman@ibew.org.
Rebuilding Together
L.U. 3 (catv,em,es,et,fm,lnt,nts,cse,spa,st,wspt), ST. LOUIS, MO — Spring is upon us, and hopefully you find yourself gainfully-employed. Our local RENEW chapter is busy with its upcoming annual trivia night fundraiser. Funds raised go to our local relief committee. This is always a huge success. If you are unable to get a table for the trivia, you can support the cause by sending a donation. St. Baldrick's released its annual report in January, and Local 2’s fundraiser was the 12th highest grossing event of 2023, with several Local 3 members showing in the top participants’ list.

“Being a part of such a big local union, we know we could reach out far and wide as members and show the public that we are there for our neighbors and care,” Gannon said. “It’s important the public sees the good things we as Local 3 members do, and what could be more important than saving children’s lives?”

Daniel Hintom, Comm. Dir.

Local 15 Negotiates
NRG Contract Extension
L.U. 15 (u), DOWNERS GROVE, IL — On Nov. 8, President Chris Rizer and Vice President Ben Busser were able to negotiate a contract extension with NRG Energy. Local 15 represents the craft employees at four NRG-owned generating stations. During a unit meeting with many members from the Powerton Generating Station, Busser, Chief Steward and Heath Messman discussed the upcoming contract negotiations. Busser took input from these members prior to engaging the company in contract negotiations. The existing CBA would have expired March 31. Now the contract has been extended four years, to March 31, 2026.

The generating stations in this contract are Waukegan, Will County, Joliet and Powerton. Waukegan, Will County and Joliet stations recently closed, but each location has caretaker positions remaining. Prior to engaging the company in contract negotiations, the existing CBA would have expired March 31. Now the contract has been extended four years, to March 31, 2026.

We look forward to an even better 2024!

James Shaw, B.M.

Local 41 Apprentices
Excel at Food Drive
L.U. 41 (em,es,et,fm,spa), BUFFALO, NY — Fourth-year apprentice Derrick Prezyna came to our local with the idea to have an apprentice food drive competition. To make it fun, we decided that the apprentice class that donated the most non-perishable food would have dinner provided during class.

The first couple of weeks started slowly, as a few cans trickled in daily. It appeared that only the second-class year was after the free meal, bringing in about 30 items per class. Then one day, while grabbing a couple of cans from each classroom, I walked into the first-year room to find 260 items.

This was the first domino to fall in what turned out to be a fierce and fun competition. As we updated progress charts daily, the contest really started to heat up. During the last two days of the competition, more than 2,900 items were collected.

Over the course of a month, our 145 apprentices brought in almost 4,400 items, more than 3,200 pounds of food. Due to the volume of donations, we were able to make contributions to three local food pantries. I would like to thank all our apprentices, as this was truly an amazing showing of generosity that will help many families in our community.

Matthew M. Gaiser, A.B.M.

Local 47 Looks Forward to 2024
L.U. 47 (lctt,mo,lctt,olsk), DIAMOND BAR, CA — Greetings, brothers and sisters. Business Manager/Financial Secretary Colin Lavin looks forward to the changes coming as we continue to grow the IBEW’s jurisdiction and cause and defend ourselves against any opposition that threatens our Brotherhood, including external threats. Some other trades are moving in on laws so they will benefit and steal our way of life. Make no mistake, we have a fight on our hands. The future has plenty of work for all the trades to share. Some, however, want to take our work. Get ready for tomorrow, and be prepared for change that will happen when least expected. Plan your job and work your plan. Please stay safe and work safe so all our families can see us when we come home.

Our business updates are:
• Southern California Edison arbitration regarding the termination of Ridgecrest Construction

Supporting Local Lines Articles
Local Lines are printed monthly on an alternating even/odd local number schedule. They can be submitted by designated press secretaries or union officers via our online form. For deadlines and questions, please visit ibew.org/media-center/supporting-local-lines or email locallines@ibew.org.

We make every effort to assist local unions in publishing useful and relevant local union news; however, all final content decisions are made by our editorial team. Please adhere to a 200-word limit.

If you have an idea for an Electrical Worker story, please contact the Media Department at (202) 728-6219 or media@ibew.org.

Trade Classifications

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 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.
Local 77 President Walter Gribble III presents a 60-year service pin to his grandfather, Ernie McGee.

Local 71 Member Celebrates 60 Years of Service

L.U. 71 (ibteu,ts,se&spa), COLUMBUS, OH — Happy New Year, brothers and sisters! With another year behind us, President Walter Gribble III was able to present his grandfather, Ernie McGee, with his 60-year service pin. Walter said, “I’ve always tried my best to convey to the newbies coming in as to how it’s our duty to try and do better to ensure a bright future for those who will come after us.”

On behalf of Local 71, congratulations, Ernie!


Local 131 Sees Steady Work, Increases Organizing

L.U. 131 (ibteu,ts,se&spa), KALAMAZOO, MI — The work outlook remains steady in Kalamazoo, and several projects should be starting this summer. The Gun Lake Casino project is continuing into the summer. The project has the first six floors enclosed, and the rest is open. The aquadome is a shell with lots of underground work. We appreciate the warmer days of spring.

The Retirees’ Christmas party was a lot of fun, with 50 members and their spouses attending. The Kalamazoo Jan. 31 annual party (1-31 Day) was also lots of fun at One Well Brewing.

Organizer Ryan Lewis has successfully organized 25 highly qualified nonunion journeys and apprentices. Membership development is the only way we can have enough members to successfully fill all the requirements in the next year.

Negotiations are continuing, and committee members Jon Current, Lenny Crabtree, Tim Haydon, Terry Clark and I are working hard to get the best contract to serve the membership. The committee is creative in their problem-solving methods during the negotiating process.

Morris A. Appleby, B.M.

Local 177’s Children’s and Retirees’ Christmas Parties

Local 177’s children’s Christmas party was successful thanks to many volunteers, such as Raymond Easter (the Grinch), Carlos Nunez (Santa) and Office Manager Lisa Gibbons.

Local 177 member Anthony Savage and Business Manager Shane Wolfe with Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear at the grand opening of Sandy’s Racing and Gaming Casino in Ashland, Ky.

Retirees gathered for fun at Local 317’s Christmas party.

Thanks to everyone who donated their time and energy to help make the holidays a joyous time for all. And a special thanks to retiring Treasurer Sean Cullen. For many a year, due to his special connections at the North Pole, we are proud to be able to say that Santa himself was at our hall this year. I hope we’ll be saying that for many more years.

Brian Jacopo, P.S.

Greetings From Wilmington

L.U. 317 (ibteu,ts,se&spa), WILMINGTON, DE — Greetings from our local, powering the state of Delaware and Cecil County, Md.

Our RETEW committee held an “ugly” Christmas sweater party after our annual family Christmas party. RETEW received multiple appreciated donations of hundreds of toys from fellow members and contractors. The RETEW committee gave the proceeds to the kids at A.I. DuPont Children’s Hospital, north of Wilmington.

Our local also held our December Christmas retirees’ meeting, where we had more than 75 retired members stop by.

Some of our local’s building trades delegates and alternates attended a banquet for our future candidate for governor of the state of Delaware, Bethany Hall-Lang, a fellow union member. We appreciate the members who were able to help support our local and the Delaware Building Trades.

David Rhuddle, P.S.

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Scan with a QR reader!
**Local 343 Milestones, Memories and Celebrations**

L.U. 343 (I,spa,kct), LE SUEUR, MN — It was 45 years ago, on April 1, 1979, that our local was formed. The International Office granted the power to 25 electricians to create a local union of the IBEW. Those members are listed on the charter that established Local 343 in Le Sueur, Minn. At that time, the jurisdiction was larger and Le Sueur was a central point on the map. Almost all of the charter members were deceased. Brother Richard Schnepf is listed on the charter; he passed away in 2023.

We remember the following members that we lost this past year: Maurice Brown, Kevin Chinhart, Louis Downing, Nicholas Eide, Douglas Haines, Bryan Heidmarch, Bruce Johnson, Charles Johnson, Eric Johnson, Mark Landerin, Robert Pollenis Jr., Scott Rennie, Richard Schnepf and Robert Wilson. Compared to many, Local 343 is young. But still, each year we have a new graduating class of apprentices who become JWs and begin their careers, and we have the challenge of trainees who “finally made it.” Join your brothers and sisters at the annual awards banquet on April 13 in Winona, Minn., to celebrate 45 years of building Local 343.

Send it where you earn it: Buy Made In USA.

**Children’s Christmas Party at Local 349**

L.U. 349 (em,es,lm&pb,tcb,spa,spk&pd), MIAMI, FL — As 2023 was ending, we had our annual children’s Christmas party, where members and children alike had a great time. There were lots of cotton candy, hot dogs and popcorn. Santa came and spoke to all the children, and he asked them what they wanted him to bring them. After Santa gave out gifts to the kids, he headed back to the North Pole. President Brian Rappaport thanked Santa for visiting all the kids and raffled off bikes to those of all ages while the members received either a tur- ken candy, hot dogs and popcorn. Santa came and dren alike had a great time. There were lots of cot.

**Local 499 Gives Back to Community**

L.U. 499 (uj, DES MOINES, IA — At the time of this writing, members Mike Maher and Randy Sheard are preparing to deliver Christmas baskets to fam- ilies in need. One family lost their house to a fire a week before Christmas. A group of members from Council Bluffs, Iowa, organize this event annually and raise the money themselves throughout the year. This year, the group was able to donate 22 baskets. We thank our Council Bluffs members for their dedication and support in giving back to their local community!


**Local 601 Is Stronger Together**

L.U. 601 (ibkb), CHAMPAIGN-URBANA, IL — Our local would like to thank all the members that came out for our annual holiday parties. We’re heading into 2024 with the momentum the labor movement has built recently. Stay union strong together!

Luther Baker, P.S.

**Local 617 Celebrates Solidarity**

L.U. 617 (cem,em,u&ptc), CINCINNATI, OH — 2023 was a great time for our local, and we met or exceeded all our goals for the year. One of those goals was increasing membership participation in community volunteering events such as our annual teddy bear giveaway to Cincinnati Children’s Hospital, the breakfast with Santa, Matthew 25 Ministries’ volunteer day and the Cincinnati St. Patrick’s Day Parade.

We also set a goal of 80% or higher of our members completing PML — Politics, Activism, Livelihood — training, which we exceeded. We have been involved in some local organizing efforts and also showed support for other locals in their efforts. We capped off the year by celebrating 80 years of serving our members.

Local 1245 advisory council member Michael Patterson testifies before the Oakland City Council in support of the safe-work-zone ordinance, flanked by fellow 1245 organizing stewards who stood with him to show support.

Local 1245 advisory council member Michael Patterson testifies before the Oakland City Council in support of the safe-work-zone ordinance, flanked by fellow 1245 organizing stewards who stood with him to show support.
RETIREES

Join Local 1 Retirees’ Club for March Meeting

RETIREES’ CLUB OF U.L. 1, ST. LOUIS, MO — March marks the first Retirees’ Club meeting for the year, and the officers would like to extend a warm welcome and invitation to our retired brothers and sisters to attend our meeting March 20 at 10 a.m. We invite special guests to come and speak at our meetings on topics concerning the interests of Local 1. We wish all of our brothers and sisters the best and look forward to seeing you.

Jim Schano, P.S.

Local 3 South Jersey Retirees’ 25th Anniversary

RETIREES’ CLUB OF U.L. 3, NEW YORK, NY, SOUTH JERSEY CHAPTER — Happy New Year to all! This year, the South Jersey chapter of the Retirees’ Club celebrates its 25th anniversary. Members of the club worked again with the Maritime Corps from Red Bank, N.J., and with Toys for Tots, led by Lou Cohen. Lou and his crew worked from Nov. 27 to Dec. 22. A holiday luncheon was held at Ruocco’s Restaurant in Manalapan, N.J., on Dec. 8. (See photo, bottom left.) The main holiday party was held Dec. 20 at the Local 400 hall. I would like to thank all our members for a great 2023.

Nancy Savarese, P.S.

Local 3 Retirees’ Club Holiday Spirit

RETIREES’ CLUB OF U.L. 3, NEW YORK, NY, WESTCHESTER/PUTNAM CHAPTER — On Dec. 12, the Westchester/Putnam chapter held its annual holiday party. This festive event was hosted at a local Italian restaurant in Tuckahoe, N.Y. Many members showed their holiday spirit by wearing their “ugliest” Christmas sweater to the luncheon. The annual party had a great turnout from our retirees and their spouses. Also in attendance were several Local 3 representatives who were happy to be a part of this annual celebration. It was a sunny and joyous day, filled with an abundance of great food, drinks, laughter and musical entertainment from our newly elected chairman, Steve DiDonato. Our chapter also acknowledged several of its members who celebrated their 60th birthdays in 2023. Each member was given a “Golden Certificate” commemorating this milestone.

All club events are donated to the Fisher House Foundation, a charity that builds homes for visiting families of wounded veterans while they are being treated in the hospital. We would like to thank all our officers and members for their dedication and participation in making our club a success. We wish all our fellow brothers and sisters a healthy, prosperous and happy new year!

Frank Balbo, Comm. Dir.

Happy New Year From Local 35 Retirees’ Club

RETIREES’ CLUB OF U.L. 35, HARTFORD, CT — Greetings, and Happy New Year to all. The Retirees’ Club had their Christmas meeting earlier this month. Twenty retirees attended, and it was great to see everyone. Thank you to Business Manager Michael Nealy and Business Representative John Bowen for attending. A huge thanks goes to Local 35 members for providing this year’s lunch. Retirees are now meeting at the Knights of Columbus, 175 Pascone Place, Newington, Conn. We hope new retirees will join our meetings at noon on the second Wednesday of each month. Lunch is provided. The next meeting will be March 15.

Congratulations to all members who retired in 2023. We wish them a wonderful retirement! We would like to honor the retirees who passed in 2023: Eugene Gallo, Retirees’ Club Chairman Steve DiDonato and Business Agent Louis Sanchez.

From left, Local 3 Business Agent Richard McSpedon, award recipient Albert Micka, Retirees’ Club Chairman Steve DiDonato and Business Agent Louis Sanchez.

Local 53 Past and Future Retiree Events

RETIREES’ CLUB OF U.L. 53, KANSAS CITY, MO — Happy New Year, brothers and sisters. I hope this article finds all of you in good health.

I have a few things to report on. Local 53 will have its annual crappie tournament April 27. We hope you can attend and enjoy the day. There will be good food and drink. It will be a great day to visit and talk about the good times of our younger years and the future as well.

We held our Retirees’ Club dinner Oct. 27, and we had a good turnout, with good food, great visitation and a drawing for gift cards. All of us appreciated this dinner. Thank you to Local 53.

Local 53 held its annual Christmas party Dec. 15 at Stony Creek Hotel. There was good turnout, food and entertainment, and everyone enjoyed themselves. Thanks again to Local 53.

On a sadder note, we lost a good friend and brother, Joe Garrett. He will be missed by all who knew him and worked for him or with him. He passed away in his sleep at home Nov. 21. May the good Lord take him home to rest in peace.

Mike Greene, Pres.

Local 1547 graduates of the Tom Cashen Training Center: from left, Wyatt Hamilton, David Schneider, Tanner Pollack, Garon Bishop, Kole Wheeler, Steven Guarna, Glenn Conwell and Casey Herman-Hoskins.

Tom Cashen Training Center Graduates

L.U. 1547 (c, m, u, l, u, l, t, k, l), ANCHORAGE, AK — Our local congratulates third-year Tom Cashen Training Center graduates pictured in the accompanying photo (left).

Melinda Taylor, Comm. Dir.

Local 1579 Teaches and Involves

L.U. 1579 (Ik6), AUGUSTA, GA — Hello, brothers and sisters. Hopefully, everyone is starting to see weather warmer and going on spring outings like golf, softball and fishing. Spring also brings out more of our two-wheeled friends, so with that in mind, please keep your mind fresh and your eyes on the road and off the cellphone while driving.

The work situation in Augusta has been maintained since my last article, but as the Savannah River Plutonium Processing facility moves out of demolition and into construction, we will see a rise in employment on the project. Our prime contractors at the Savannah River site are holding their own and picking up projects here and there, and our in-town shops are doing the same.

We’re still offering plenty of continued education classes for our journeyman wiremen, such as Fiber Optic, CPR, OSHA 10 and 30, CPR, and EVITP. We want all of our IWs to get involved. The classes are free, but the knowledge is priceless. Feel free to contact the hall for more information.

Toll me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.

Mike Greene, Pres.

Don’t Miss Out on All the Fun

RETIREES’ CLUB OF U.L. 105, HAMILTON, ON — At the time of this writing, I am happy to note that our Retirees’ Club has been able to enjoy and schedule these events:

• Euchre, every Monday afternoon
• Grand River cruise (Sept. 24, 2023)
• Lunch at the Mandarin (Sept. 28, 2023)
• Oktoberfest, hosted by our Kitchener local (Oct. 12, 2023)
• Fish fry (Oct. 31, 2023)
• Caledont Niagara Falls (Nov. 7-10, 2023)
• Toronto Christmas party, hosted by our Toronto local (Nov. 26, 2023)

Join Together, Continue the Work

RETIREES’ CLUB OF U.L. 58, DETROIT, MI — In December we held our annual Christmas party at the local union hall. We had more than 310 attendees, and our numbers are growing as COVID-19 goes further into our past. We had a great time, with a visit from Santa and photos, a catered lunch, 50/50 drawings, and lots of reminiscing with new and old friends. Our board does lists of planning and work to make this annual gathering a success, and we appreciate all those who step up and help with cleanup when the party winds down. Thanks to all who attended, and best wishes for a prosperous, successful and healthy 2024!

November 2023 brings us an important election. We all need to keep our eyes on the prize. Let’s not let the distractions from criminal formerly elected officials take our attention away from what is at stake here. Decide now to deny those folks any oxygen to feed their flames of falsehoods and continue disbelieve in the letter of the law. To quote Margaret Mead: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed individuals can change the world. In fact, it’s the only thing that ever has.” We must join together and continue the work.

Pat Naznov, P.S.
The Electrical Worker | March 2024

Local 257’s Retirees’ Club Christmas party was hosted by the local Dec. 12.

First, We Eat
RETIREE’S CLUB OF L.U. 654, CHESTER, PA — Several of our retired brothers and sisters meet every other Wednesday morning at a local establishment for breakfast. These breakfast dates feature significant stories from the past and present, but mostly from the past. It gets very loud with laughter and excitement until the food arrives, when it quiets down considerably.

Brother Bill Shaw has been organizing these breakfast get-togethers for decades. Brother Bill Martin sends out bi-weekly breakfast reminder emails to our retirees. He also distributes coffee mugs inscribed with the slogan “First We Eat — IBEW 654, Retirees Breakfast.” Brother Russ Fox shows up extra early and helps the waitresses put the tables together. He also coordinated a banner and T-shirts with our breakfast slogan on them. Hats off to both Bills and to Russ for their brotherly efforts.

On Dec. 13, the officers and members of Local 654 put on a fantastic Christmas luncheon for our retired brothers and sisters in our union hall’s grand ballroom. The festivities and camaraderie filled us all with holiday spirit. There is nothing more fulfilling than sharing a meal and re-igniting friendships with brothers and sisters that you worked with side by side for decades.


Happy, Healthy 2024
RETIREE’S CLUB OF L.U. 356, DAYTONA BEACH, FL — 2023 was a slow year for trying to rebuild attendance at our Retiree’s Club meetings, especially after COVID-19 shut us down for two years. We are hoping this year will bring more members back to our meetings to see old friends and reminisce.

We had a pin ceremony at our November 2023 meeting and want to congratulate everyone receiving pins, both those who were present and those who were not able to make it. Thank you all for your many years of service.

With sadness, we must announce that we have had one member pass since our last article. We send our condolences and prayers to the family and friends of Brother Rex L. Rawlins. We miss him greeting everyone at the door and his great stories.

We would like to invite any retired or unemployed brothers and sisters and their spouses in the area to come and join us. Our meetings are held the second Wednesday of each month at 1:30 a.m. at the Local 756 union hall in Port Orange, Fla.


Local 527’s Retirees’ Club Christmas party was hosted by the local Dec. 12.

First, We Eat
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On Dec. 13, the officers and members of Local 654 put on a fantastic Christmas luncheon for our retired brothers and sisters in our union hall’s grand ballroom. The festivities and camaraderie filled us all with holiday spirit. There is nothing more fulfilling than sharing a meal and re-igniting friendships with brothers and sisters that you worked with side by side for decades.


Happy, Healthy 2024
RETIREE’S CLUB OF L.U. 356, DAYTONA BEACH, FL — 2023 was a slow year for trying to rebuild attendance at our Retiree’s Club meetings, especially after COVID-19 shut us down for two years. We are hoping this year will bring more members back to our meetings to see old friends and reminisce.

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With sadness, we must announce that we have had one member pass since our last article. We send our condolences and prayers to the family and friends of Brother Rex L. Rawlins. We miss him greeting everyone at the door and his great stories.

We would like to invite any retired or unemployed brothers and sisters and their spouses in the area to come and join us. Our meetings are held the second Wednesday of each month at 1:30 a.m. at the Local 756 union hall in Port Orange, Fla.


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Grey, 100% acrylic knit hat with IEW initials in script. Hat is designed to be over sized and slouchy.

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The regular meeting of the International Executive Council was called to order at 1:00 pm, by Chairman Erikson, on Wednesday, August 30, 2023, in Chicago, Illinois. Other members of the council in attendance were Shirley, Finke, Cunningham, Chin, and Griffiths. Council members Calvey, Calabro and Riley attended via audio/video conference call.

International President Cooper
International President Kenneth W. Cooper met with the members of the International Executive Council to discuss a variety of matters affecting all branches of the Brotherhood.

International Secretary-Treasurer Noble
International Secretary-Treasurer Paul A. Noble presented financial reports covering the IBEW Pension Fund and the Investment Portfolio of the Brotherhood both in Canada and in the United States.

Legal Defense
Payments for legal defense, made from the General Fund, were examined, and approved in accordance with the requirements of Article X, Section 1, of the IBEW Constitution.

Financial Reports
The International Secretary-Treasurer’s Reports for the various funds of the Brotherhood were presented to the members of the International Executive Council, examined, approved, and filed.

Appeals Filed with The International Executive Council
The International Executive Council conducted a thorough review of the facts pertaining to an appeal from Local Union 353-member Perry Speranza, and it is the decision of the IEC to deny Brother Speranza’s appeal.

The International Executive Council conducted a thorough review of the facts pertaining to an appeal from Local Union 106-member Steven R. Stoeltzing, and it is the decision of the IEC to deny Brother Stoeltzing’s appeal.

Article XX and XXI Cases
There were no new Article XX or XXI cases during the second quarter of 2019.

Trusteeship
There are two local union under trusteeship, Local Union 2390, St. John’s Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada and Local Union 150, Baltimore, Maryland. The IEC authorized a six-month extension to both trusteeships for Local Union 2390 and Local Union 150.

IEC Consolidated Balance Sheet
IEC Consolidated Balance Sheet ending June 30, 2023
Reviewed and Filed

IEC Pension Benefit Fund
Consolidated Balance Sheet
ending June 30, 2023
Reviewed and Filed

Retirement of International Representatives
Bruce McNamara, International Representative, First District Effective — August 1, 2023
David Jones, International Representative, Ninth District Effective — August 1, 2023
Jeffrey Carter, International Representative, Sixth District Effective — August 1, 2023
Raymond Kasmark, Director, Business Development Department Effective — September 1, 2023

Organizer
Thomas Murphy, State Organizing Coordinator, Membership Development Department Effective — June 1, 2023

This regularly scheduled meeting was adjourned, on Wednesday, August 30, 2023, at 4:30 p.m. The next regular meeting of the International Executive Council is scheduled for Tuesday, December 19, 2023.

For the International Executive Council
Myles J. Calvey, Secretary
August 2023

The IEC acted on numerous applications under the IBEW pension fund. For a complete listing, consult www.ibew.org, clicking on the International Executive Council link on the “About Us” page.

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 Workers 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: med@ibew.org
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The Electrical Worker was the name of the first official publication of the National Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in 1893 (the NBWE 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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Paul A. Noble
International Secretary-Treasurer
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Myles J. Calvey
Third District
Daniel L. Shirley
Fourth District
William W. Riley
Fifth District
Donald B. Finn
Sixth District
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Seventh District
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Tenth District
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Michael Pointer
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Joe Conway
Emily Welsh
Mike Palm
Javier Piersend
New York Apprentices Pen ‘Wire Women’ Children’s Book

Motivated by a question posed in class at Empire State College, New York Local 3 apprentices collaborated with professor Sharon Symanski (back row, third from left) on a children’s book to show young girls what it’s like to be a union electrician.

A requirement of the New York Local 3 apprenticeship is that everyone get at least an associate’s degree in labor studies. It dates to the days of legendary Business Manager Harry Van Arsdale Jr., who believed that all members should have critical thinking skills as well as electrical. A recent product of that decades-old mandate is the children’s book “Wire Women Lighting It Up: What It’s Like To Be a Female Union Electrician.”

Co-written by eight apprentices—who women and one man—with one journeywoman serving as an adviser, the book came out of Professor Sharon Symanski’s class “Women, the Economy and the Trades.” A question that always comes up, Symanski said, is, “Why aren’t there more women in the trades?” For one cohort, the answer was that young girls don’t know that being a union electrician is an option—and a good one.

“We need to show young girls that if they can see it, they can be it,” said Local 3 journeywoman Erin Sullivan, who consulted on the project. “This book is a way to do that.”

With that as a catalyst, Symanski developed a course specifically to write a children’s book. The students researched children’s books about work, and to get ideas about messaging and style, they read articles and watched videos about women in unions. They even heard from New York firefighter Brenda Berkman, who was the subject of her own children’s book about her struggle to become a firefighter in the late 1970s. What they discovered is that there aren’t many books about tradeswomen, much less union tradeswomen.

“We wanted to fill a void,” said Symanski, who shares author credit with her students. “Young girls don’t hear about this.”

Accompanied by watercolor-style illustrations, “Wire Women” takes the reader on a tour of what it’s like to be an electrician, from “pulling wire with the strength of an elephant” to climbing ladders “with the agility of a mountain lion scaling a peak.”

And since this is a book about New York City wirewomen, there are passages on lighting up the Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center, powering the subway and lighting the giant ball that drops every New Year’s Eve in Times Square. It also includes fun facts, like the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree weighing roughly 11 tons and using over 50,000 lights that could stretch out over five miles.

“My students have a lot of passion for their trade and for seeing their work, and the book shows that,” Symanski said.

Now they have one more thing to be proud of: being published authors.

“It was a really fun project,” fourth-year apprentice Natalie Rivera said. “It was cool to see our words come to life alongside the illustrations.”

For fifth-year apprentice Mary Lin Gil, the book is an example of the potential in so many wirewomen and other Local 3 members.

“To see that I am part of something like this makes me proud, and it makes my family proud,” Gil said. “My son is my biggest inspiration and my biggest fan, and he loves the book.”

It’s not just Gil’s son, either. The reception to the book, which was written for all ages, has been positive, said publisher Tim Sheard.

“People who see the book love the book,” Sheard said. “We produced a beautiful product that adults like as much as children.”

As a book born out of a labor studies class and published by Hard Ball Press, a union publishing house, “Wire Women” doesn’t shy away from the importance of being a union member. Or as the book states, “Wirewomen are superheroes, and our union is our superpower.”

Being a union member is “how women do better,” Sullivan said. “There are more positives with a union, and the book makes that connection clear. It’s good for parents to see, too.”

Part of the goal of showing young girls that they, too, can be electricians was to show how varied the work is, and how many paths a person can take with their journey worker’s license.

People have a limited idea of what electricians do in general,” Rivera told labor publication WorkBites in an interview for the book. “I did, too. But now, even my daughter knows more about tools at 3 than I did when I first came into the union.”

“Wire Women” also shares how many journeywomen didn’t start out as electricians. Some were teachers or graphic artists. Others were store clerks or worked in an office. But they all wanted something more, and they found it as union tradeswomen.

“It just goes to show you that our membership loves this trade and what they do,” Local 3 Business Manager Chris Erikson said. “That they were able to so easily share it with others exemplifies that.”

While Local 3 has a long and proud history of inclusion, Erikson noted that eye-opening books like “Wire Women” could have drawn more women to the electrical field much earlier.

“We are proud of the pioneers and of these apprentices who put their hearts on their sleeves to share their fulfillment and what motivates them with others in the hopes of increasing the number of women in our industry,” said Erikson, who also chairs the International Executive Council.

“Wire Women” has inspired other projects. Sheard said he would like to do a book on all tradeswomen. Symanski said she’s working on a labor calendar that will include different artistic works from some of her students. Rivera completed her bachelor’s degree in December and said she’s looking forward to having more time to pursue her passions. It’s part of the message that she hopes readers will get from the book.

“Try new things. You never know what you may be good at or what will spark a passion,” Rivera said.

If the book has one overarching message, it’s that being a union electrician isn’t just a good way to pay the bills, it’s also an incredibly fulfilling career—and one girls can aspire to.

“Being an electrician has made me more confident as a woman and as a mom,” Gil said. “I’m helping to light up New York City. Women are a power that cannot be underestimated, and that’s what the class, and the book, exemplified.”