Hill/Chilia/Pierson Leadership Team Re-Elected

More than 2,000 delegates at the 38th International Convention unanimously elected International President Edwin D. Hill and International Secretary-Treasurer Salvatore “Sam” Chilia to five-year terms Sept. 19.

International Executive Council Chairman Robert Pierson was also elected by acclamation.

President Hill told delegates, “It is an honor to serve you as I have done all of my adult life. I wear proudly the honor of my membership in this, the greatest trade union in the world—and I will stand side by side with you all as we move this Brotherhood forward.”

Telling delegates of the importance of continually changing to meet the challenges of today’s economy, Hill stated, “Not everything that we have had to do has been popular at first. But you—the leaders of your locals—have recognized the need to join together to forge a new reality, one that is necessary and desirable for our future and the future of this Brotherhood.”

President Hill expressed the need for leaders to face the tough questions and be willing to engage the membership in the big discussions about the future of the Brotherhood, referring to the many comments posted by IBEW members on the union’s official Facebook page.

“Believe me you’ve got to have a tough hide not take it all personally—but I take the criticism and I welcome it,” he said. “Because I know while the pushback comes from frustration and anger—it also signifies a willingness to talk—and to listen—to absorb a new way to look at the issues and gather new ideas.”

New York City Local 3 Business Manager Christopher Erikson placed Hill’s name into nomination, praising him for providing leadership by example and “never forgetting that he is one of us.”

Secretary-Treasurer Chilia said he was humbled by the show of confidence delegates placed in him, saying that “I thank God for the IBEW and the labor movement, because without it, our members and the greater community would be lost.”

Pierson thanked delegates for the honor and privilege of serving as IEC Chairman, and that he pledged to do his part to “work with all the officers to keep the course steady and the flags flying.”

New York City Local 3 9/11 Memorial Fund

New York City Local 3 President John Marchell reported on the local’s Sept. 11 memorial fund, established to assist the families of the 21 IBEW members from Locals 21 and 1212 who died in the attacks:

- 403 IBEW locals contributed $2,022,075.
- 6,038 individuals contributed $691,841.
- NECA contractors contributed $500,000.
- IBEW affiliates contributed $38,578.
- An additional $682,456 was collected, of which $500,000 came from the son of a deceased Local 3 member.
- Total contributions came to $3,934,950.
Hill Keynote: ‘Reclaim the Union’s Birthright’

Thanking IBEW members and leaders for their courage in standing up to a failing economy and right-wing, anti-labor politics, International President Edwin D. Hill brought delegates to their feet as he asked them to reject fear and pursue the timeless mission of the IBEW and the labor movement.

Hill underscored the early progress since the last IBEW Convention—“A” membership increasing to an all-time high and an unprecedented grassroots political mobilization contributing to Democratic control of Congress and the election of President Barack Obama.

“Our progress came to a screeching halt as the recession spread beyond the shattered portfolios of the big banks and investment houses and spread its tentacles around the world,” said Hill.

“There is one big difference between us and the generation that founded the IBEW 120 years ago,” said Hill. “They had nothing to lose.” Pensions, health care and middle-class lifestyles can lead to some members being fearful, hoping that the storm will blow over.

But, he said, “The Great Recession is looking like an unwelcome relative sleeping on the couch—it is not here for the short term but threatens to settle in for a long stay.”

Declining union numbers and unemployment have exacted great pain on IBEW families, but have also taken a deep toll on the union movement. Joblessness clouds judgment and results in working people casting protest votes, says Hill, “even if their support goes to phony populists bought and paid for, lock, stock and barrel by the corporations and powerful billionaires.”

“We have slowly lost the hearts and minds of the community, but we are in a good position to help restore labor’s standing in the community,” said Hill.

The mobilizations to defend collective bargaining in Wisconsin, Ohio and other states has, said Hill, shown that “The Tea Party doesn’t have a monopoly on anger—and we are showing the upper middle class what real populism looks like.”

CLC Leader Georgetti: Fight Fiction with Facts

Canadian Labour Congress President Ken Georgetti tells delegates that union leaders must educate and mobilize their members to take on the anti-worker politicians.

“Did anyone here in this room take billions of dollars in bonuses while killing jobs? If it wasn’t IBEW members, was it teachers? Was it nurses? Postal workers? Or was it a pipe fitter like me? Of course not.”

Wanted: Good Stories

Do you have a good story that others would want to hear about—like innovative ways of winning new members or political battles? How about a member or retiree who is going above and beyond the call of duty for your local union and would be a good subject for a feature story?

Send us an e-mail at media@ibew.org or stop in and visit us at the Media Department office across from the registration desk on the first floor and we’ll make time to talk.

Speakers for Tuesday

John Rowe
Exelon Corporation CEO and Chairman

Ed Schultz
Host of MSNBC’s “Ed Show”

Liz Shuler
AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer

Jerry O’Connor
IBEW Secretary-Treasurer Emeritus
IBEW members and leaders from across North America convened at the opening ceremonies of the 38th International Convention Monday, Sept. 19, setting a tone of reverence for tradition and the optimism for the work ahead.

Five years since the last meeting in Cleveland and after years of planning, a dazzling multimedia spectacle unfolded in the Vancouver Convention Center. With cutting-edge visuals and zooming light effects, the front and side walls of the convention floor transformed to display massive video screens showcasing portrayals of workers.

“I am the IBEW,” said a towering, diverse group of workers representing all trades of the IBEW.

An actor portraying IBEW founder and first President Henry Miller touted the strength and resilience of the union members: “In the face of opposition, we formed the Brotherhood of today—a Brotherhood without limits, a Brotherhood beyond borders.”

Making their entrance, International President Edwin D. Hill and International Secretary Treasurer Salvatore Chilia emerged on the stage to the beat of pulsing rock music.

Hill fired up the crowd with a rousing greeting, eliciting cheers from attendees when he mentioned the previous night’s ceremonial lighting of the 2010 Olympic torch during the delegates’ reception.

“Light is a very powerful symbol of our union,” Hill said. “Not only does the work we do provide light, energy and communications to the continent—our Brotherhood is also a light in lives of all it touches, standing for dignity and justice in a world where neither are guaranteed.”

Hill called the convention to order after being presented with a one-of-a-kind, hand-carved gavel crafted by Edmonton, Alberta, Local 424 member Jim Bendfeld. He then offered a tribute to retired Third District International Representative Michael H. Namadan, who played a vital role in Hill’s upbringing, early career and entrance into union office before he died in July. “He was there every step of the way,” said Hill.

To begin the session, First District International Vice President Phil Fleming welcomed delegates, inviting first nations’ Musqueam members Rose Point and her nephew, Shane Point, to offer ceremonial prayers.

The Vancouver Police Pipe Band, which presented the colors, offered a vivid musical salute to the convention’s host nation. Edmonton, Alberta, Local 1007 Assistant Business Manager Jimmy Connor sang the Canadian national anthem. And for the first time in IBEW convention history, Canadian members recited their nation’s pledge of allegiance.

Third District International Vice President Don Siegel introduced the Sword of Light Pipe and Drum band, comprised of New York Local 3 members. The ensemble dedicated its performance to their former drum major, James Conway, who passed away last spring. After the band processed out of the convention hall, Anchorage, Alaska, Local 1547 member and assistant shop steward Cody Beltrami offered a soaring rendition of “The Star Spangled Banner.”

Delivering the first invocation of the convention, Rev. Frank John Franz prayed that the week finds delegates making “the right choices” to ensure bright futures for working families. He quoted from the Bible’s book of Micah in calling on delegates to do justice for members of the union.

Members also observed a moment of silence for the 21 members of New York Locals 3 and 1212 who lost their lives on September 11. Local 3 President John Marchell gave a report announcing that nearly $4 million had been collected for a disaster fund established for IBEW families who lost loved ones.

It was another moment of solemnity that was a thread of the morning, offering gravity and repose within a broader spectacle that energized thousands of delegates during their first session on the convention floor.

Credentials Committee Report
A total of 2,023 delegates were registered for the 38th International Convention. A total of 714 local unions are present representing 663,832 members, as relayed to the to the Convention by International Executive Council Chairman Robert Pierson.
Unity and solidarity were major themes of the opening day’s activities of the 38th International Convention—all which struck home for East Windsor, N.J., Local 827 Business Agent Georgeanne Scarpelli, whose local represents more than 5,800 Verizon and Verizon Connected Solutions throughout New Jersey at the bargaining table.

The two-week strike against Verizon in August electrified working families across the country, and put the fight for good jobs front and center.

“There was phenomenal sympathy from the public because they understand that this fight was about our country’s No. 1 problem—the lack of good jobs,” says Scarpelli.

She says that the fight at Verizon is a concern for all for IBEW members. “It’s the frontlines of the fight to save the middle class. A job at Verizon can be a great job for a wireman’s son or daughter, but it’s our job to keep it that way.”

Verizon employees were able to get the telecommunications giant to back off some of its concessionary demands, but the fight for a good contract continues.

Delegate Voices: In Verizon Fight, Solidarity is Key

A ‘Pledge’ to All IBEW Troops

At Monday’s opening ceremonies, IBEW leaders were hoping to provide a video of member Kevin Urquidez reciting the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance he recorded while on duty in Afghanistan.

The Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Local 405 apprentice is serving with the 322nd Engineering Division. Kevin has served several tours of duty in the Middle East.

Unfortunately, a death in Urquidez’ area forced a communications blackout, prohibiting video transmittal. So Third District International Vice President Don Siegel called on all U.S. citizens to say the pledge in honor of the soldier’s unit and all IBEW members in the nation’s fighting forces.

Young Worker Profile: Battling Ohio’s Anti-Union Offensive

At Monday’s opening ceremonies, IBEW leaders were hoping to provide a video of member Kevin Urquidez reciting the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance he recorded while on duty in Afghanistan.

James Jette, a member of the 38th Convention’s young worker contingent, is in Vancouver to get some ideas on how to get his young co-workers to “take some ownership” in the union. A 10-year member of Columbus, Ohio, Local 1466, Jette works at American Electric Power.

Jette sees high stakes for unions in the state’s capital city. He has been actively involved in the fight to overturn anti-union Senate Bill 5. The bill would limit collective bargaining to wages and hours of employment, bar bargaining on health care, privatization of government work, minimum staffing rules and other items.

“A lot of people who didn’t think that politics matters are really seeing that it affects us,” Jett said. “There’s a mix of Democrats and Republican union members, but everyone is uniting against SB5. If we lose this [attack on collective bargaining], it will snowball.”

A lot of young people don’t know anything about unions, says Jette, whose father is a Local 1466 retiree. “We will be door-knocking and be putting more boots on the ground to defeat SB5.”

B.C. Labour Leader: ‘We Have a Responsibility’

British Columbia Federation of Labour President Jim Sinclair addressed delegates on Monday, “We are on the front lines of ensuring a decent life for members—but tens of millions of working people don’t have a union. So we have to build a movement that encompasses all working people who see us as their champions, not just as champions for the labor movement itself.”

District Photos Begin Today

Delegates are invited to gather near the bleachers at the rear of the convention floor for the following vice presidential district photos:

- **Second and Tenth after close of afternoon business**
- **Eighth District**
  1:30 p.m.
- **Ninth District**
  after morning session