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CHICAGO IS A UNION TOWN

Delegates Come to America's Crossroads for 40th International Convention



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For the fifth time, the IBEW is calling delegates from across North America together to the Windy City. Only the union's birthplace, St. Louis, has hosted more conventions, but it's been nearly 70 years since the last time delegates gathered at America's great crossroads.

The last time the IBEW convention came to Chicago in 1954, half the working population of the city had a union card in their pocket.

And while the numbers today aren't quite so overwhelming, delegates are still coming to one of America's great union towns.

"There's never been a nonunion tower crane in this city. Not ever," said Chicago Local 134 Business Manager Don Finn. "We are the number one union town in America. The IBEW wouldn't be the IBEW without Chicago."

Chicagoland is a vast nation within the nation starting at Lake Michigan and extending across at least 16 counties, three states and more than 10,000 square miles.

And it has room to welcome all May 9 to 13. McCormick Place, delegates' home for the weeklong gathering, is the largest convention center in the country.

But there is no traditional host committee, because where does one draw the cutoff?

Six locals have Chicago addresses, but another 13 have jurisdictions within reach of The Loop, Chicago's downtown core, doing every kind of job in the IBEW.

They include one of the first chartered locals in (nearly) continuous operation for 130 years and another chartered less than 25 years ago.

"Every single branch of the brotherhood is covered in Chicagoland. We're very proud of that," said Fifth District International Executive Council member Frank Furco, business manager of Lisle, Ill., Local 701.

Together, they tell the story of organized labor in North America in all its breadth, variety and change.

CHICAGO IS A UNION TOWN *continued on page 4*

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FROM THE OFFICERS

Preparing for the Future



Lonnie R. Stephenson
International President



Kenneth W. Cooper
International
Secretary-Treasurer

Sisters and brothers, this month is a special time for the IBEW, when delegates from across North America gather to conduct the union's most important business and to set the course for the years to come.

It's been six years since we were last able to hold our International Convention, and for the nearly 2,000 of you who were elected by your membership to represent your unions in Chicago, we want to welcome you and thank you for your service to this great union.

After two years of pandemic and a delay to this important gathering, we're looking forward to seeing you all in person and getting to work building an even stronger IBEW.

It's fitting that we're coming to Chicago, a city built on the broad shoulders of its working men and women, and especially its union sisters and brothers. Chicago is one of America's great union towns, as you'll read in this issue.

But it's important to remember that great union towns are made up of great union members and great union leaders. So, to each and every member of the Chicago-land labor movement, thank you for welcoming us with open arms and for all you do to create and sustain the union culture and

solidarity that make Chicago so special.

Of course, none of us would be here without the labor activists of the past, and nowhere is that history stronger than in Chicago.

In a city that is hosting its fifth IBEW Convention, we will be surrounded by the memories of some of the greatest struggles for workers' rights in North America's history. From Haymarket and the Pullman porters to the Memorial Day Massacre, Chicagoans have shouldered more than their share of violence and loss in the fight for fair treatment on the job, and the trade unionists of today owe them a great deal of gratitude.

As we come together to elect leaders and chart the future of the IBEW, we do so on the shoulders of those brave men and women, and we pledge to honor their sacrifices with our commitment to continue the important work they started so many years before.

This will be our 40th International Convention, and much has changed in the 131 years since our 10 founders met in St. Louis with the idea for a broad union of electrical workers committed to improving the lives of every person working in this industry.

Today, we represent a much broader range of trades and occupations, but that commitment remains unchanged. The IBEW exists to make your lives better, to provide the security of safe working conditions, fair wages, decent health care and a dignified retirement, and the decisions we make this month will be crucial to defending those ideals.

As our industries change and evolve, the choices made in Chicago will help to guide our response to those transformations and how we continue to grow in both numbers and strength to increase our influence with employers and government officials at every level.

The task ahead for your officers and delegates is enormous, but we know that each of them bring the same commitment and determination that we do to emerge from Chicago a stronger IBEW than when we arrived.

For those of you not attending this year's convention, we'll be covering each day's proceedings on IBEW.org and here in the Electrical Worker, which will print a combined June-July issue this summer. We hope you'll follow along and engage with your local's delegates both before and after the convention.

Your voice is important. This is your union, and each International Convention is an opportunity to add your voice to those of your union sisters and brothers and to influence the future of the brotherhood.

We are grateful for the trust you've put in us these last six years, and we look forward to serving you in Chicago. ■



2021 PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS

IBEW SHORE-TO-SHORE

FIRST PLACE

David Schwegmann
Cincinnati Local 212

Every picture tells its own complete story, and the "how" of a picture doesn't usually rate telling. But Cincinnati Local 212 member Dave Schwegmann's photo contest winner of Lineman Ryan Robles breaks that mold. Getting to this angle is at least as interesting as the picture itself.

Schwegmann was a photojournalist before he joined the IBEW at age 32 three decades ago. Not only does he still bring his equipment, he also brings a reporter's unstoppable desire to get the shot.

"I'm not bashful about getting in anywhere with my camera," he said.

When he saw a lineman being helicoptered onto a tower at a shuttered powerhouse he had worked on years before, he figured they had to be IBEW. And if they were, he said, he was pretty sure he could "Hey buddy" his way in.

The coal burner in Lawrenceburg, Ind., was being torn down and the substation repurposed as a tie-in across the Kentucky River to the Miami Fort power station in the background.

"I told my fiancée, 'If I can get on there, I can get some badass pictures,'" he said.

The 2021 photo contest voters seem to agree.

It took perseverance but he got on site, then got the blessing of Duke Energy and, finally, permission from the helicopter company.

The resulting photograph from the heartland won out over a strong class of runners-up and honorable mentions that capture the IBEW on the coasts.

2021 PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS



SECOND PLACE

Brad Masse | Vancouver, B.C., Local 258

When Brad Masse worked on a special project a few years ago that included landing a 40,000-pound bridge, he knew it would be one worth documenting.

Masse was part of a crew of roughly 100 Local 258 members that helped build part of a new transmission line that ran approximately 350 kilometers from Vancouver to the interior of British Columbia.

They pre-built sections of towers in a large fly yard, then the sky crane would land them and they'd climb the towers and bolt them together. "I chose this photo because it highlights the teamwork and dedication it took for all of us union members to complete it," Masse said.



THIRD PLACE

Paul Salgado | Diamond Bar, Calif., Local 47

Local 47's Paul Salgado took this picture of a lineman descending the pole during a rodeo in Butte, Mont. The best linemen move fast enough that wood chips fly in their wake, and Salgado captured that intensity. He also hopes he captured the lineman's heart and competitive spirit.

It's all part of Salgado's current job with Sturgeon Electric, where the journeyman lineman holds a marketing and media position that not only utilizes his photo skills but also has him host a podcast.

The switch came after Salgado was injured on the job, but he hasn't ruled out returning to the field someday.

Look for the launch of the 2022 IBEW Photo Contest in the August *Electrical Worker* and on IBEW.org. In the meantime keep capturing the best of the IBEW at work. ■

HONORABLE MENTION



Ethan Furniss | Portland, Ore., Local 48

Ethan Furniss is a regular photo-taker around the job, he says, so it was natural for him one morning to pull out his phone and capture how the orange glow of sunrise could turn the plain concrete walls of his cavernous Hillsboro, Ore., construction site into temporary works of art.



Michael Ranweiler | Portland, Ore., Local 48

Broadcast engineer Michael Ranweiler says he literally ran to capture this moment at the Stacker Butte site in the Columbia River Gorge one afternoon just as the clouds parted and the flowers were bursting into bloom. Not always stuck in a studio, he sometimes visits the site to maintain transmitter equipment.



Michael A. Paras Jr. | Baltimore Local 24

Mike Paras knows being able to gaze out an open wind turbine nacelle is an unusual experience. While working out of Cumberland, Md., Local 307 on a project near Elk Garden, W.Va., last summer, he captured another wind farm in the distance near Scherr Mountain, framed perfectly in the nacelle's opening.

Continued from page 1

CHICAGO IS A UNION TOWN

Delegates Come to America's Crossroads for 40th International Convention

Just south of The Loop is the gleaming new hall of Local 134, the largest of the Chicagoland locals and, at 122 years, one of the oldest.

Local 134's more than 12,000 members are as varied as inside construction can be. More than 7,000 "A" inside wiremen, 5,000 commercial and tenant improvement electricians, 1,700 communications workers, and more work under more than 1,000 contracts for 643 — and counting — contractors and 45 manufacturers.

Since the end of a protracted construction trades lockout in 1906, union members have built every monument of stone, steel and glass that make Chicago a world wonder. They built the factories that made it the steel mill for the world and the thousands of bungalows that sheltered generations of the city's working families.

Even as the pandemic ground the economy to a halt and killed the convention business that made up 10% of their annual hours, the lines for the apprenticeship test have never been longer.

"We have to spread the test to three weekends now," Finn said. "The want and need to be a member of 134 has never been greater."

And the city has never needed the IBEW more, either. Generational projects like Lincoln Yards and "The 78" — which alone will have 70 buildings, including the city's first casino — are a generation's worth of work.

Chicago, Finn said, is what it has always been: the IBEW's past, present, and future.

"It is a complete honor that we will host the convention," he said. "Welcome to our home."

The honor of being the oldest Chicago local goes to Local 9, chartered in 1893. It is one of three remaining original single digit locals, along with St. Louis Local 1 and Toledo Local 8.

Local 9 remains a pre-eminent outside construction local today, with about 94% market share.

Few Chicagoans know the city better than Local 9 members. They work on power lines and traffic signals in the city and in surrounding municipalities including Naperville, Cicero, Elmwood Park and Oak Park. They also maintain wireless communication networks and keep the Chicago Transit Authority running, including the city's legendary "L" system.

Local 9 also has members working in government, utility, cable television and line clearance and tree trimming.

"We're in a very good spot because of a lot of hard work and the relationships with our partners and our customers," Business Manager William Niesman said. "Our membership prides itself on working hard and sticking together. We all have a common-sense, blue-collar mentality."

Niesman said Local 9 has been suc-

cessfully reaching out to local high school students, teachers and administrators about the value of a career in the trades. The Middle States Electrical Contractors Association, Local 9's signatory contractors, recently spent \$40 million to upgrade the apprenticeship as more of them join.

He's also proud that Local 9 negotiated a lower retirement age from 62 to 60.

"Our members work out in the elements, not in a building; that wears your body down," Niesman said. "We want to give people who work an opportunity at a good career and a long retirement."

The airwaves in Chicago

are no exception to the city's strong union culture. Chicago Local 1220 was formed in 1939 when more than 400 radio broadcast engineers moved from Local 134 to the Midwest Associated Broadcast Technicians Unit. ABTU was created because the International Office decided "it took a radio man to organize a radio man."

Two years later, it was officially chartered as Local 1220 of the ABTU of the IBEW.

Today, Local 1220 represents crews at some of the city's most prominent TV and radio stations, including CBS affiliate WBBM; WGN; WSCR-670, home of the Cubs; employees under national pacts at CBS and Fox Sports; and public TV's WTTW, where the community rallied behind striking workers during a three-week walkout this spring.

"Our members were unified and selfless on the picket line," Business Manager John Rizzo said. "Their sacrifices made this contract possible."

There's other success brewing at the local. "I'm the new coffee king," Rizzo laughs, cheering last year's wins at the Colectivo coffee chain and hinting at more to come.

In a triumph over union-busting, baristas in Chicago and Wisconsin voted to join a combined unit represented by Local 1220 and Milwaukee Local 494 and are preparing to bargain a first contract. Rizzo encourages convention-goers to roll out the welcome mat.

"There are five Chicago locations, so if you're out and about, stop by for a great cup of coffee or tea and let them know we're happy to have them with us," he said.

Railways fueled Chicago's rise from remote settlement to the city it is today. It is fitting that rail locals comprise one-quarter of the Chicagoland IBEW.

At its peak in the first half of the 20th century, there were 4,500 miles of railroad track within Chicago's city limits and, on average, a train arrived or departed every minute of every day.

Today, it remains the most important interchange point for freight traffic between the nation's major railroads. Six

of the seven Class I railroads meet in Chicago; only the Kansas City Southern Railway doesn't.

Keeping it all humming are the locomotive, telecom and system electricians and HVAC crews that form the core of the IBEW's rail membership, spread across five locals, each covering different rail lines.

In Chicago, Local 533 contracts with BNSF and Canadian Pacific while Local 214's 250 members work on Chicago & Northwestern Transit and Union Pacific lines and engines.

There is a separate contract for Amtrak, served by Local 794's 165 members who maintain the largest Amtrak hub outside the northeast corridor, said Railroad Director Al Russo.

The 95 members of Joliet, Ill., Local 757 maintain the railstock and communications equipment for Canadian National, Belt Railway of Chicago, Gary Railway, and CNR, a holding company that runs the Chicago, Central & Pacific Railway, Elgin, Joliet & Eastern Railway, Illinois Central Railroad and the Wisconsin Central Railway.

Just outside city boundaries and across state lines is the fifth, Gary, Ind., Local 186. The small shop founded just over a century ago has just 25 members today covering two freight rail companies, Indiana Harbor Belt and CSX.

Chicago history is full of labor battles centered around the rail lines from the Great Strike of 1877 to the Haymarket massacre. Rail barons then or multinational conglomerates today, rail workers have always had to fight exploitation.

Unfortunately, the past isn't always past, said Local 533 President Mauro Navarro. His local's recent struggles with employers are emblematic of the sector generally. Wages and conditions were already bad, he said. When COVID-19 hit, management saw their chance.

"They used it as an excuse to close a repair shop, putting 30 of us out of work in September 2020. Meanwhile BNSF was recording record profits," he said.

Fortunately, other IBEW locals took in many of them.

"Chicago is the end of line, but it's also where it all begins. We are the hub at the center, and even if it is less of a union town than it may once have been, we're still strong and we will get stronger," he said.

Construction is booming

in the greater Chicagoland area, and nearly a dozen inside construction locals are at the heart of it.

North and west of the city, Elgin Local 117's jurisdiction straddles the border between the suburbs and the country. The local's 400 members, nearly all inside wiremen, do a combination of commercial, prevailing wage and residential, though that business was hit hard by the Great Recession.

In recent years a fair bit of the local's work has come from conveyor



Local 176 members work on the CPV Combined Gas Plant Project.

belt-filled distribution centers popping up in former corn and soybean fields, Business Manager Jesse Lenart said.

Despite being in the Hoosier State, Gary and Hammond, Ind., Local 697 members can often see Chicago's skyline — especially if they are working the BP Refinery in Whiting, the sixth largest in the United States. Working at the refinery has been a rite of passage for generations, especially since it began a \$14 billion modernization effort in 2012.

The steel industry remains an important force in the region, with Inland Steel and U.S. Steel still there. Employment among steel workers is a fraction of what is once was, but Local 697 members played a key role in the plants' modernization and ongoing maintenance.

Business Manager Joree Richards said Local 697 benefits from its proximity to Chicago in many ways, not least having the highest wage scales in Indiana. The traditionally strong union state has been plagued by a generation of anti-union governors and legislators, however, and became a right-to-work state in 2012.

But in the northwest part of the state, known as The Region, unions remain strong and the future looks better than it has for a long time.

"In the last two years, what's been interesting to me is that, in a political setting, it's been OK to use the word "union" again. That's a welcome change," Richards said.

Lisle, Ill., Local 701 has just a sin-

gle county, DuPage, to call home, but its impact within that space is immense, Assistant Business Manager Tony Giunti said.

The local is primarily an inside construction local with some municipal employees, but it has long represented employees at two major U.S. Energy Department Facilities: Argonne National Laboratory, the largest research laboratory in the Midwest; and Fermilab, which specializes in high-energy particle physics. Both are part of the famed Illinois Technology and Research Corridor.

Work remains strong at both facilities, as it does at most of Local 701's major employers, and apprentice classes are larger each year.

Giunti said the staff and members take pride in Business Manager Frank Furco being a member of the International Executive Council and in being the home local of Secretary-Treasurer Emeritus Jerry O'Connor, who served as its business manager from 1978 to 1987.

In 1914, Lake County, just north of the Chicago on Wisconsin border, was spun off from Local 134 and Waukegan, Ill., Local 150 was chartered.

Lake County is home to 12 Fortune 500 companies including pharma giants like Abbott Labs, AbbVie, Medline, Horizon Therapeutics, Baxter, Takeda, and Pfizer.

The 1,000 members of the primarily inside local average over one million hours per year in just a 25-square-mile jurisdiction.



Above, Local 364 members install the final piece of underground at a Dekalb data center. Left, Local 1220 members rally during a recent three-week strike at WTTW.

new Hard Rock Casino means the 104-year-old local is hosting more than one traveler for every member that calls Rockford home.

“It’s been nuts,” he said. “It’s all good in northern Illinois right now.”

Golden said one of the best parts of working in Rockford is that all the trades have been around for nearly a century — though he proudly claims his local as the oldest of the lot — and job sites work smoothly and cooperatively.

“Everybody works well together. The attitude is, ‘Whatever comes our way, we can deal with it,’” he said. “And after the pandemic, there are no obstacles we can’t overcome.”

Rockford is also home to an outside local, one of the oldest in Chicagoland.

Local 196 was chartered in 1901 and has jurisdiction in 14 counties in northern Illinois, stretching from the Wisconsin border to the far western Chicago suburbs all the way west to the Quad Cities area on the Mississippi River.

Business Manager Eric Patrick said most of the members are outside linemen, but it is home to utility, telephone, maintenance, and government members as well as the bus mechanics and custodial staff at Rockford Mass Transit District.

It got a massive boost in 2011, when the state Legislature passed a 10-year, \$2.6 billion grid improvement program for ComEd, the primary electric supplier in the northern part of the state. Local 196 members and other IBEW locals lobbied hard for the bill’s passage.

“That’s meant a lot of great stuff for an outside local,” said Patrick.

To meet the workforce demands, Local 196 recently opened a new training facility on a 5½-acre lot in Genoa, Ill., about 30 miles southeast of Rockford.

As far out as the Chicagoland umbrella may spread, one of the locals included in the Convention family sticks out a bit farther.

With as many counties in Iowa as Illinois, Rock Island Local 145 sits clear across the state from Chicago and looks to the Great Plains more than it does the Great Lakes, said Business Manager Cory Bergfeld.

The local can’t really claim to be at the heart of Chicagoland, but it does have a claim to the spotlight. Long before he accepted the international presidency, Lonnie Stephenson sat in the chair Bergfeld occupies today.

“Most of the people who knew Lonnie when he was working the tools have retired, so we give the new ones an education,” Bergfeld said. “I am proud to be sitting in his seat, but it is humbling.”

Today, Local 145’s 1,200 members are about evenly split between a closed shop state (Illinois) and a right-to-work state (Iowa), with nearly all their work in the industrial and commercial center known as the Quad Cities: Davenport and Bettendorf in Iowa, and Rock Island and Moline across the Mississippi in Illinois.

One of their major employers is the Rock Island Arsenal, the only active U.S. Army foundry, but they also have contracts with John Deere, 3M, the Quad Cities nuclear plant and Arconic (formerly Alcoa) as well as a handful of outside contractors for local utilities and co-ops.

“We are a walk through and have been for the past 9-12 months,” he said. “We kept on trucking right through the pandemic.”

Bergfeld says his members are rightly proud of their corner of Illinois and can hold their head high in any company.

“We are hugely proud to have the leader of the IBEW come from our own,” he said.

Keeping the lights on is all in a day’s work for the men and women of Chicagoland’s utility sector, who are excited to welcome delegates to their hometown.

“It’s a big deal,” said Terry McGoldrick, business manager of Downers Grove, Ill., Local 15, whose local represents 3,500 workers at ComEd in northern and central Illinois. “We’re obviously excited, a little nervous.”

But Local 15 has plenty of experience of succeeding when the stakes are high. Over the past three years, it led the fight to save two Illinois nuclear plants and save more than 200 IBEW jobs.

McGoldrick was there when Gov. J.B. Pritzker ultimately signed the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act last September, preserving the existing fleet of nuclear reactors as part of the state’s clean-energy strategy.

“It was nothing short of amazing. We were there every single day of the legislative session,” said McGoldrick,

who is quick to credit fellow IBEW locals, union allies, and the AFL-CIO for critical support.

McGoldrick said the political win was fueled in part by goodwill earned by his members who help every charitable project they can, particularly the United Way.

“It’s all employee-driven — our people go out and do all the soliciting, and they’ve raised hundreds of thousands of dollars over the years,” he said. “I don’t know of any major companies that have such a strong program.”

Covering much of the same footprint as Local 15, Aurora Local 19’s 1,400 members serve the area’s 2.2 million Nicor Gas customers across 34 counties.

They, too, are active volunteers in the region, raising money for United Way, collecting food and winter coats, painting houses, and otherwise helping their far-flung communities, Business Manager Andy Nacke said.

Chartered in Downers Grove, Local 21’s jurisdiction is the largest in Chicagoland. Once a month, Business Manager Paul Wright drives up, down and across Illinois, as well as to the northwest corner of Indiana, to hold seven membership meetings, returning to a new three-story local hall in Lisle, Ill.

Most of Local 21’s 4,500-plus members work for AT&T and its offshoots, as well as other telecom and cable TV companies.

Over his decade in office, Wright is proud of the progress his local has made in growing to look more like the communities it serves. An executive board that he says was “mostly white telephone repairmen” now has a Black chairman and minority and women members.

Local 21 also represents health care workers at state-run nursing homes. Until recently, there were two, but despite the local’s best efforts, one closed. Wright still gets heated recalling not only the loss of 160 members’ jobs, but the cruelty of a conservative county board that shut the facility down and kicked out its residents several months into the pandemic.

The local also represents two 911 call centers, including Chicago’s. Should convention delegates have cause to call the line during their stay, they’ll be talking to an IBEW member, which should be a comfort.

When the convention arrives, Chicago will welcome members from every country and classification under the wide tent of the IBEW.

They will come, like so many who came to Chicago from around the world, on a mission to accomplish something great and with a work ethic second to none.

The “City of Broad Shoulders,” as poet Carl Sandburg wrote, will welcome them with open arms, just as it has so many millions in its 185-year history. Then, it will put them to work. ■

“Chicagoans are known for our quality of work, work ethic, and the diversity of our workforce. Rain, sun, or snow, we always get the jobs done,” said Business Manager Steve Smart.

Smart said the membership is getting excited about the coming convention, eager to show off how the region has changed.

“The city has changed so much over the past 20 years with new towers, renovation of stadiums and Navy Pier and the expansion of O’Hare Airport that it will be very impressive to showcase to the entire IBEW,” he said.

Southwest of Chicago is the energy, chemical, and manufacturing hub of Illinois, centered in Joliet and the jurisdiction of Local 176, which covers the I-80 corridor from Indiana to Iowa.

“We have two nuclear power plants (Dresden and Braidwood), two oil refineries (ExxonMobil and Citgo), and numerous petrochemical and chemical plants and many other manufacturing facilities,” said Business Manager Mike Clemmons.

While logistics facilities are becoming a central business for the IBEW, few can compete with Local 176, which is home to several rail/highway facilities,

including the 6,400-acre CenterPoint Intermodal Center-Joliet, North America’s largest inland port.

“We have over 100 million square feet of logistics space built out in our local with more coming online each day,” he said.

Clemmons hopes the collar counties will not be forgotten in the convention.

“Our area is a stronghold for the labor movement, ranking consistently in the top 10 in the IBEW in market share. We are blue-collar, hard-working middle-class people with a great work ethic,” he said. “We are steeped in labor history; we continue to make history, and we’re dedicated ensuring the future success of the labor movement in our local.”

Like so many locals, Rockford, Ill., Local 364 Business Manager Alan Golden said his is blessed and busy.

A single, 10-year, \$3.4 billion data center job is employing nearly 700 of his 800 members.

Meanwhile, the local’s traditional mix of industrial, powerhouse and residential work goes on. The Dresden nuclear plant — Illinois has the largest nuclear fleet in the nation — keeps nearly 100 members busy each year and a

Chicago's Long and Extraordinary Labor History

When the National Brotherhood of Electrical Workers chose Chicago for its second convention in 1892, it was coming to a city that already had a rich and singular history as a fierce union town. Battles for workers' rights and dignity had been going on for decades, but it wasn't until the end of the Civil War that the modern labor movement was possible.

With the end of slavery, a new economic order was established in the United States. It still wildly favored the owners of capital, but permanent gains for workers were at least plausible. But nothing was given, all was won, and many of the most pivotal moments in U.S. labor history happened on the streets of Chicago.

Trades and the Birth of the Modern Labor Movement

In the 20 years from 1860 to 1880, Chicago's population grew from slightly over 100,000 to more than half a million.

This astonishing growth happened even after one of the great calamities of the latter half of the 19th century, the Great Fire of 1871.

Three and one-half square miles of the city turned to ash, leaving at least 300 dead and almost a quarter of the city homeless.

But Chicago's confluence of sea and rail, agriculture and industry, was simply too powerful for the city to stand idly by. From the Great Fire came the great expansion that took the city from 10,000 structures in 1854 to more than 100,000 by the end of the 1880s, the largest building boom in the history of the nation.

By the 1890s, the Chicago Building Trades Council included about 30,000 workers in 31 separate trade unions, including IBEW Local 9.

This period also saw the rise of the great industries that would make Chicago famous, including the Union Stock Yard and the mills and factories of the Southside.

But it was the railways, and the monopolistic power wielded by the men who ran them, that generated the most labor unrest, organizing and ultimately violence.

Between 1880 and 1905, there were an estimated 37,000 strikes in the U.S., and the worst violence was often in Chicago.

The Great Railway Strike of 1877, for example, was honored nationwide. In some places, it was effectively a general strike. Of the more than 140 workers and their supporters killed in clashes with federal troops that year, at least 30 were killed in Chicago on a single day at the so-called Battle of the Viaduct.

Seven years later, workers met in Chicago at the 1884 convention of the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions — renamed the American Federation of Labor two years later — and set May 1, 1886, as the date by which the eight-hour workday would become standard.

On that date, hundreds of thousands struck in

cities across the U.S. Tens of thousands struck in Chicago, and thousands more joined them in daily marches. Workers locked out of the McCormick Reaper Plant clashed with strikebreakers, leaving two dead. The next night, a demonstration was called for Haymarket Square. As the crowd was dispersing, hundreds of police, armed and marching in formation, began pushing the crowd down the street.

Someone threw a bomb, killing policeman Mathias J. Degan.

The police fired on the fleeing demonstrators, reloaded, and then fired again, killing a wildly disputed number in the crowd — at least four, likely more — and wounding upwards of 70. Seven more officers were also killed, many by bullets fired by other police.

Though no one would ever know who threw the bomb, eight anarchist organizers were convicted in a trial that became infamous for its corruption. Four of them were hanged a year later. A fifth committed suicide in his cell the night before. The three remaining defendants were pardoned in 1893.

Haymarket was notable for the massive outpouring of community and business support for the police. In the following days, hundreds of labor leaders were arrested and the movement for the 8-hour day died.

The story of the massacre and hangings spread widely and became a symbol for labor organizers around the world. In honor of the Haymarket dead, May 1, later dubbed May Day, was established as the global day to honor fallen workers and demand better for the ones who still live.

In 1880, George Pullman, founder of the Pullman Palace Car Company, maker of the famous sleeper cars, incorporated a town, named it after himself, and centered it around the factory he owned. He built houses, a church, and stores, all of which he owned and rented out.

By the economic crisis of 1893, more than 12,000 people lived in his town, and since the company gave employment preference to Pullman residents, most worked in his factory.

The recession killed rail travel and orders for sleeper cars plummeted. Pullman started laying off workers and announced wage cuts averaging 25% for the hourly workers that were left. Management pay and rents did not fall a penny.

The squeeze bit hard. Members of the American Railway Union struck nationwide, refusing to work on trains with Pullman cars.

President Grover Cleveland deployed 12,000 federal troops (approximately half the U.S. army at the time) supposedly to keep the peace, but primarily to break the strike.

In Chicago alone, 13 were killed and at least 57 wounded.

Once again, the strike was broken.



Chicago's Union Stockyards, pictured here in 1880, grew from a small collection of animal pens to be the largest meat producer in the world from the Civil War until the 1920s. The yards earned Chicago the title "Hog butcher for the world."

The IBEW and an End to a Violent Era in the Trades

While most of the violence and repression of Chicago workers was centered in the industrial sector, the trades were not immune.

By the turn of the century, trades unions in Chicago were organized and coordinated. Through sympathy strikes, production limits and restriction of labor-saving equipment, the skilled trades were able to force a general agreement that raised wages and standards.

But in 1900, the year of Local 134's founding, the general agreement expired. The Building Contractors Council refused to sign a new contract and locked out 40,000 trades workers.

The craft unions refused to recognize the BCC and when 6,000 scabs were brought in, violence again erupted across the city. Police were called in, union organizers were beaten and arrested and within a year membership in the trades unions plummeted.

But as bad times cause hardship, good times often make them disappear. As the new century dawned, construction demand rose, the BCC dropped their wage cuts and blacklists and rehired union tradesmen.

Two decades later, the cycle repeated. A deep slump in 1921 led to wage cuts, unions refused to accept them, and employers locked them out.

Chicago business leaders formed a so-called "Citizen's Committee" of armed vigilantes and strikebreakers and another vicious era of conflict followed.

By mid-decade, after at least two deaths, demand soared once again. Contractors abandoned the cuts and hired union tradesmen for most tasks.

However, this time the cycle was finally broken. The 1921 labor battles marked the last large-scale outbreak of violence in the Chicago construction industry even during the depths of the Great Depression.

The building boom of the 1920s was at least as big as the skyscraper boom 30 years prior, but this time the beauty of the buildings became a global phenomenon.

New zoning laws raised heights for unoccupied upper floors and Art Deco masterpieces collectively known as brownstones rose around the city, often topped by decorative towers that brought them to then unheard of heights approaching 400 feet.

The most ornate and celebrated — the Tribune Tower, the Wrigley, Carbide and Carbon, London Guarantee and Chicago Temple buildings — became

engineering and architectural icons.

Buildings weren't just beautiful, they were massive. The Merchandise Mart, built in 1931, was once the largest building in the world and even had its own zip code until 2008.

This period also saw other groundbreakings.

Mike Boyle was one of the founders of Local 134. He was elected business manager in 1919, a position he held until 1958.

In his first year as business manager, Doyle organized Sam Taylor into the union, the first confirmed African American member of the IBEW. In 1943, Boyle appointed Herman Washington as a business representative making him not only the first Black business representative in Local 134, but also the first in all the building trades in Cook County.

1937 Memorial Day Massacre and WWII Reforms

While there was relative peace in construction, the same could not be said in the factories, where violence reminiscent of a half century before came back with a fury in the coldest days of the Great Depression.

By 1933 more than 50% of industrial jobs in the city had been lost, and unemployment rates amongst Black and Mexican workers was over 40%.

In 1937, several smaller steelmakers, including Republic Steel, refused to follow the lead of U.S. Steel and sign a contract that included a standard pay scale, an 8-hour workday, and time-and-a-half for overtime.

The 67,000-member Steel Workers Organizing Committee of the Congress of Industrial Organizations called for a national strike in May 1937. Over the next five months, thousands of strikers were arrested, hundreds were injured and 18 killed.

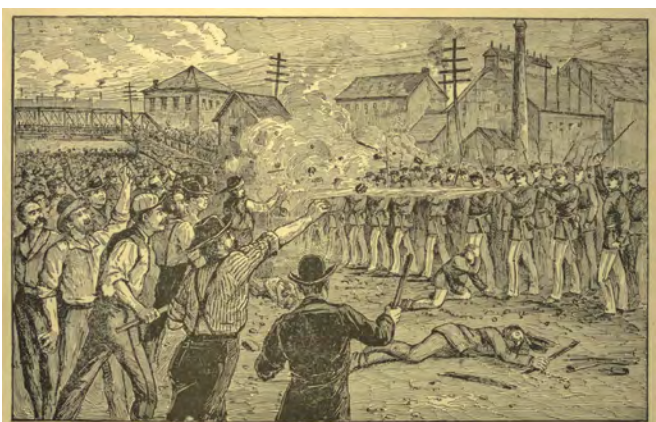
The worst violence, again, was in Chicago. On Sunday, May 30, thousands of strikers and supporters set out to form a picket at Republic Steel. The police first fired tear gas and then their revolvers into the crowd.

When the sun rose, 10 lay dead, 30 more had been shot, 28 were hospitalized with eight suffering permanent disability.

Virtually all those shot had wounds in the back or side.

By September, the strike broken, the little steel mills were open and union organizers were blacklisted.

It wasn't until 1942 — under the eye of the



The "Battle of the Viaduct" took place as part of the much larger Great Railroad Strike of 1877. Dozens of workers were killed by police and federal troops on Chicago's South Side.

National War Labor Board — that Little Steel agreed to a union and paid \$20 million of back pay to those blacklisted in 1937.

Little Steel's agreement was a marker of the new era for American Labor coming out of the New Deal, from strike, death, gains, and losses to something new.

The transformation was symbolized by the rise of a Chicago labor giant, Joseph Keenan. Keenan joined Local 134's apprenticeship in 1914 at the age of 18 and rose through Chicago labor's ranks.

In 1937, then-International President Daniel Tracy nominated him to be one of seven people on the National Defense Advisory Commission tasked with mobilizing national defense. Then, from 1943 to 1945, he was the Vice Chairman for Labor of the War Production Board, where he worked to stabilize industrial relations in the construction field and to halt strikes and work stoppages while arbitration agreements were conducted.

Organized labor was finally seen as an asset and its voice was brought into the very heart of the U.S. government.

He was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest honor the nation can bestow on a civilian, in 1946 by President Harry S. Truman for his work during the war.

Keenan was later the first Secretary of the American Federation of Labor's Building and Construction Trades Department and then the International Secretary of the IBEW from 1954 to 1976.

Labor peace unleashed the industrial might of Chicago which, alone, produced more steel than the United Kingdom every year from 1939 to 1945, and more than Nazi Germany from 1943 to 1945.

It also hinted at what was possible when unions were allowed to be partners and workplace democracy was given a chance to flourish.

The City with Broad Shoulders 1945-1980

Once the war in Europe ended, a new era began in U.S. and Chicago labor.

Up until the war, the Chicago Federation of Labor had been dominated by the craft unions and was led for decades by John Fitzpatrick, who came from the Horseshoers.

The new face of Chicago labor came from the huge and growing factories in a belt from Chicago to Gary, Ind.

After a series of strikes in 1947 across the nation, a new period dawned as wages rose year on year and union membership reached its peak. In Chicago nearly half of all workers were in a union.

Even the construction trades made their way outside the Loop. Until the 1960s and early '70s, the mills on the Southside were fully half of Local 134's work.

Downtown, a building boom in the late



The 1894 Haymarket Affair in Chicago began as a peaceful demonstration in support of the 8-hour workday. It ended with a bombing that killed people on both sides and became the origin of International Workers' Day on May 1 each year.

1950s through the 1960s rivaled those of the 1880s and 1920s.

Major construction projects started seemingly all over the Loop, culminating in the Sears Tower (now known as the Willis Tower) which, in 1974, became the world's tallest building.

Of equal ambition and size, if not height, was McCormick Place. With its four interconnected buildings, it is the largest convention center in the nation and third largest in the world and a huge source of work for the IBEW. To this day, more than 10% of the manhours at Local 134 are trade shows.

The Decline of Industry and the Closure of the Stockyards

At its peak during the 1960s, some 250,000 workers were employed in the steel industry in Chicago and the stockyards were the meat locker of the nation.

But the decline was steep in the 1980s and only 28,000 jobs were left by 2015. The 475-acre stockyards withered in the 1960s and were ultimately shuttered in 1971. All that remains is the granite arch that used to be the front gate.

Still Chicago's economy was never driven by just one thing. Industry may have declined, but the city was also a financial powerhouse, a medical hub for the Midwest and the home of many universities.

For visitors, Chicago may be its towering skyline, but for the blue- and white-collar workers that call it home, the building that defines Chicago is the humble bungalow.

New York is the city that never sleeps, but Chicago is the city that never ends. More than 80,000 make up "The Bungalow Belt," stretching along the outskirts of Chicago in a crescent shape outside the Loop. And just like those skyscrapers, nearly every one was built by the union trades.



The Electricity Building at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago showcased George Westinghouse's alternating current system and featured an appearance by Nikola Tesla himself.

The Service Economy Rises 1980-Present

By the 1980s the conversion of Chicago into primarily a white-collar city was reflected in the make-up of the unions there.

For the last 40 years, the most common workplace for a Chicago union member isn't a factory or a construction site, it's been a classroom, government office or a hospital.

For decades, organizing a teachers' union was illegal, but it happened anyway. In 1897 Chicago teachers organized into the Chicago Teachers' Federation. But it wasn't until 1967 that the Chicago Teachers' Union was recognized by the Chicago Board of Education.

Today, the Illinois Education Association has 137,000 members — the most in Chicago — and few unions have more public support or influence, with the possible exception of the state and municipal workers.

State public workers didn't get the right to organize until 1974; city workers didn't follow until 1983, adding hundreds of thousands of new union members in Illinois.



An 1893 recession and subsequent layoffs pushed workers at the Pullman railroad car company to strike. Violence erupted and the strike was broken, but their legacy lives on in the federal Labor Day holiday.

The growth of public sector unions was matched by the growth of the unionized service sector. The end of WWII launched the second Great Migration of African Americans coming up from the south. Some got the last jobs at the stockyards and were crucially important in the unions there.

Many others went into the service industry, and unlike most cities in the U.S. where janitors and cleaning ladies were little more than an exploited underclass, in Chicago they found powerful unions with deep roots in the early 20th century.

In 1902, janitors, elevator operators, and window washers organized the Chicago Flat Janitor's Union, the nation's first union of building employees. In the winter of 1917, following strikes that left some Chicago buildings without heat, the union's 6,000 members (roughly 20% of them African American) and Chicago's Real-Estate Board agreed to a citywide contract that included a closed shop, arbitration of disputes, and a ban on forcing wives of janitors to do janitorial work.



IBEW International Secretary, Presidential Medal of Freedom winner and Local 134 member Joseph Keenan meets with President John F. Kennedy at the White House in 1962.

In 1921, the Chicago Flat Janitor's Union became Local 1 of the new Building Service Employees' International Union, the forerunner of the Service Employees International Union, which had its international headquarters in the city until 1990.

Today, Chicago is home to the second-largest central business district in the United States, the third-largest inter-modal port in the world after Hong Kong and Singapore. It is one of the most economically diverse and union dense cities in the country.

Across all the transformation of the city and organized labor, one thing has remained true: the IBEW dominates the market for electrical work, winning a true 70% market share across all parts of the vast city.

Construction methods have changed radically over the decades, but the organization of work in the building trades has been remarkably stable, with a kind of peace and prosperity across the decades that was unimaginable a century ago.

At least part of that came out of the 1972 agreement, called the Chicago Plan, negotiated between the U.S. Department of Labor, area building contractors and nine Chicago-area building trades unions to address the woeful lack of Black and Latino members.

The Fourth Wave of American Labor

The future of the labor movement is being written now in cities like Chicago.

Union membership in the private sector has never been lower, and yet it has never looked better to nearly all working men and women.

For the first time in their lives, many people are looking at jobs they thought were a reliable route to the middle class, dignity and security, and instead, they see themselves eternally on the edge of crisis.

It's hard to look at the nation's financial and industrial oligarchs and not see echoes of Rockefeller, Gould and Vanderbilt.

Whatever organized labor looks like in the rest of the 21st century, Chicago will be at its center, and the IBEW, one of the oldest and grandest of North America's labor unions, will be an engine transforming lives and skylines. ■

NORTH OF 49° | AU NORD DU 49° PARALLÈLE

A Return to the IBEW Family for Members Keeping North America Safe

Most IBEW members don't have to worry about polar bears pestering them while they work. But for some members of Ottawa Local 2228, the big white bears can be a daily concern.

In March, Local 2228 negotiated an agreement with Nasittuq Corporation covering workers on the North Warning System installations along Canada's Arctic Circle border, reclaiming work that had belonged to IBEW members for decades. The agreement covers the 100 or so men and women who work all over the network: electricians to technicians, cooks to custodians — and polar bear monitors.

"Someone on bear watch is armed with a high-powered rifle to guard their fellow workers while they're out fixing equipment," said First District International Vice President Thomas Reid, who served NWS members for years as an international representative.

The NWS is a chain of 11 long-range and 36 short-range radar installations, designed to closely monitor military movement within North America's remote polar areas. Canada's contributions to this effort are part of the country's North American Aerospace Defense Command agreement with the United States.

"We've long represented these folks that service equipment to guard the north," said First District Lead Organizer Brett Youngberg. The defense network dates to the late 1950s when it was then called the Distant Early Warning System.

From about 1963 onward, as many as 400 station personnel, working for the stations' contractors, were continuously represented by Winnipeg, Manitoba, Locals 2085 and 1541. (Local 1541 was amalgamated into Local 2228 in 2017.)

In 1985, an agreement between Canada and the U.S. led to the creation of a modernized North Warning System. Workers' maintenance responsibilities and representation remained largely unchanged, thanks to Canada's historically strong successorship laws that helped union workers in a shop retain their union membership even if someone else came in and took control.

In 2000, the government of Canada started working with local indigenous populations to help them gain greater management involvement because the NWS installations are on Inuit land. Within a few years, the Department of National Defence had awarded a service contract to Nasittuq, an Inuit Canadian majority-owned corporation whose name means "looking out from a high place" in the eastern Canadian Inuit language of Inuktitut.

But by 2014, successorship laws had gradually been watered down and the Conservative government led by Prime Minister Steven Harper awarded the NWS work to a new contractor — one

that entered into an agreement with another union.

"That fight to keep the contract with the IBEW was expensive and frustrating," said Reid. But it wasn't the end of the road for the brotherhood, Youngberg said. "We maintained contact with those folks, and we put a lot of time and dedication into getting them back."

That tenacity, among other things, proved useful when the NWS maintenance contract came up for renewal this year.

"The Defence Department doesn't care who's doing the work as long as it's being done right," said Local 2228 Business Manager Paul Cameron. "When the contract came up for a bid, the department showed a clear preference for the service they'd gotten for years from IBEW members."

In March, the Government of Canada awarded Nasittuq a seven-year, \$592



million contract to operate and maintain the NWS, with Cameron announcing that, thanks to help from the First District, Local 2228 had successfully negotiated an agreement with the contractor.

"Federal government is us," said Cameron, whose members also work with

Nav Canada, the country's civil air navigation system, and several other federal government departments. "We're used to having members across the country," Cameron said.

While Local 2228 is based in Ottawa, Cameron noted that it has represen-

Ottawa Local 2228's new contract even covers people who watch for polar bears, such as the one pictured here in front of a radar dome.

tatives who work out of Alberta and Quebec, too. "These Nasittuq members will be well served," he said.

Nasittuq is responsible for remote site operations including helipads, gravel runways, more than 100 buildings and over 300 bulk fuel storage tanks. The often weather-dependent work involves anything from maintenance and logistics support to air traffic coordination.

Given the work involved and its remote location, Reid added, "It was quite a challenge organizing them back with the IBEW. "I want to give some kudos to Brett, Paul and their team. I'm happy and excited to have this group back in the IBEW fold." ■

Un retour à la FIOE pour les membres qui assurent la sécurité de l'Amérique du Nord

La plupart des membres de la FIOE n'ont pas à se préoccuper de se faire ennuyer par des ours polaires tout en travaillant. Mais pour certains membres de la section locale 2228 d'Ottawa, les grands ours blancs peuvent être une préoccupation quotidienne.

Pour récupérer la juridiction des métiers qui a déjà appartenu à la FIOE depuis des décennies, le local 2228 a négocié une convention collective en mars avec Nasittuq Corporation visant les travailleuses et les travailleurs des installations du Système d'alerte du Nord, le long de la frontière du cercle arctique canadien. La convention collective représente les quelques centaines de femmes et d'hommes qui travaillent partout sur le réseau : des électriciens aux techniciens, des cuisiniers aux gardiens, ainsi que des surveillants des ours polaires.

« La personne chargée de surveiller les ours polaires est armée d'une carabine de gros calibre pour protéger ses collègues lorsqu'ils réparent de l'équipement », déclare Thomas Reid le vice-président international du premier district qui a également été au service des membres du Système d'alerte du Nord pendant des années à titre de représentant international.

Le Système est une série de 11 installations radars à longue portée et de 36 installations radars à courte portée conçues pour surveiller de près les mouvements militaires dans le nord du Canada. L'appui offert par le Canada est inscrit

dans l'accord conclu entre le Commandement de la défense aérospatiale de l'Amérique du Nord et les États-Unis.

« Nous représentons ces membres qui entretiennent ces installations pour surveiller le nord depuis longtemps », mentionne Brett Youngberg, principal organisateur syndical du premier district. Le réseau de défense date depuis la fin des années 50, autrefois appelé le Réseau d'alerte avancée.

Vers 1963, tout près de 400 membres du personnel travaillant pour les sous-traitants qui assuraient l'entretien des stations, étaient représentés de façon continue par les sections locales 2085 et 1541 situées à Winnipeg au Manitoba. (Le local 1541 a été fusionné au 2228 en 2017.)

En 1985, un accord conclu entre le Canada et les États-Unis a mené à la création du Système d'alerte du Nord modernisé. Les responsabilités et la représentation des travailleurs d'entretien demeurant relativement les mêmes au fil des années grâce au principe de succession du Canada, qui a une forte représentation depuis longtemps, permet ainsi aux travailleurs syndiqués de conserver leurs adhésions syndicales même si la gestion est exercée par quelqu'un d'autre.

En 2000, le gouvernement du Canada a commencé à travailler avec le peuple autochtone local pour les aider à acquérir de meilleures compétences en matière de gestion parce que la Système est sur un territoire Inuit. En quelques années, le ministre de la Défense natio-

nale a attribué un contrat de service à Nasittuq, une corporation appartenant en majorité à la communauté inuite canadienne que le nom signifie « looking out from a high place » dans la langue inuktitute de la communauté inuite dans l'est du Canada.

Mais en 2014, les lois sur l'obligation du successeur s'affaiblissaient de plus en plus et le gouvernement conservateur dirigé par le premier ministre Steven Harper a attribué le travail du Système à un nouveau sous-traitant, celui qui a conclu une convention collective avec un autre syndicat.

« Cette lutte pour garder la convention collective avec la FIOE a été dispendieuse et frustrante », mentionne Reid. Mais ce n'était pas la fin pour la fraternité, ajoute Youngberg. « Nous avons conservé la convention collective avec ces membres, et nous avons investi beaucoup de temps et d'effort à les ravoir. »

Cette ténacité, parmi tant d'autres, s'est avérée utile lorsque la convention collective de l'entretien du Système devait être renouvelée cette année.

« Le ministre de la Défense ne se préoccupe pas par qui le travail est fait pourvu qu'il soit bien fait », déclare Paul Cameron le gérant d'affaires de la section locale 2228. « Lorsqu'est venu le temps de soumissionner, le ministre a clairement montré sa préférence envers les membres de la FIOE pour le rendement qu'ils ont apporté pendant des années. »

En mars, le gouvernement du Cana-

da a attribué à Nasittuq un contrat de 592 millions de dollars sur sept ans pour assurer le bon fonctionnement et l'entretien du Système. Cameron a annoncé que grâce à l'aide du premier district, le local 2228 a négocié avec succès une convention collective avec le sous-traitant.

« Le gouvernement fédéral c'est nous », dit Cameron, dont ses membres travaillent également pour Nav Canada, le système de navigation aérienne civile du pays et plusieurs autres ministères fédéraux. « Nous sommes en terrain connu, nous avons des membres qui travaillent partout au pays, » dit Cameron.

Bien que le local 2228 est établi à Ottawa, Cameron fait part qu'il a des représentants présents en Alberta et au Québec également. « Les membres de Nasittuq seront bien servis », dit-il.

Nasittuq est responsable du bon fonctionnement des installations situées dans les régions éloignées, notamment les hélicoptères, les surfaces de gravier, plus de 100 bâtiments et au-dessus de 300 réservoirs de stockage de carburant en vrac. Le travail, qui dépend souvent des conditions météorologiques, concerne tout ce qui est en lien à l'entretien et le soutien logistique à la coordination de la circulation aérienne.

Considérant le travail à accomplir et de l'éloignement, ajoute Reid, « c'était tout un défi de les ramener dans les rangs de la FIOE. Je tiens à féliciter Brett, Paul et leur équipe. Je suis ravi de retrouver ce groupe dans le giron de la FIOE. » ■

TRANSITIONS

RETIRED

David J. Ruhmkorff



Sixth District International Vice President David J. Ruhmkorff is retiring July 1, ending the career of a second-generation wireman who became a leader in the IBEW and his hometown of Indianapolis.

Ruhmkorff said he was planning to run for re-election at the International Convention in Chicago in May — which the Sixth District is hosting — but changed his mind one day in February.

While his wife, Ann, was visiting a daughter living in Houston, he was at home and found himself flipping through pictures of their granddaughter.

Right then, he realized he wanted to spend more time with family.

“I had a moment of clarity, I guess,” he said. “I liken it to being a wireman. Sometimes, you are on that big job and could make it another 10 months or a year, but you wake up and say, ‘It’s time to go.’”

Ruhmkorff noted that he and Ann have two grandchildren with another on the way this summer.

“I knew I was leaving it in good hands,” he said. “I appreciate everything the brotherhood has done for me. I’ve never known anything but the IBEW.”

International President Lonnie R. Stephenson appointed Paul Noble, a Sixth District international representative and former business manager of West Frankfort, Ill., Local 702, to replace him.

“Dave Ruhmkorff has been a close friend and confidant for nearly 30 years and his commitment to the IBEW is total,” said Stephenson, who appointed Ruhmkorff to replace him as Sixth District vice president when Stephenson was appointed president in 2015. “His combination of wisdom, dedication to service and well-timed humor is welcomed by everyone he’s worked with.

“He’s earned this retirement and I know he will still be available when we call on him. He’s been a tremendous representative for the brotherhood in his beloved Indianapolis and throughout the Midwest.”

The son of a journeyman wireman, Ruhmkorff attended college for one semester before deciding to follow his father into Indianapolis Local 481. He was initiated in 1979 and topped out three years later.

“I just wanted to be like my pop,” Ruhmkorff said. “He raised seven kids on a wireman’s salary. We all went to Catholic schools. My mom never worked. We never wanted for a lot.”

As an apprentice, he regularly volunteered for Local 481 activities and for the Indiana AFL-CIO’s phone banks on behalf of political candidates. He remembers then-Local 481’s business manager Jerry Payne thanking him in

front of a union meeting.

“I thought that’s just what you did,” he said. “I saw the importance of political activism at that time. I would take that back to our apprenticeship class and talk about the importance of that.”

From there, Ruhmkorff served as a steward on the job and on Local 481’s apprenticeship committees before then-Local 481 Business Manager Jeff Lohman — who also later served as the Sixth District vice president — brought him on staff as an organizer and business representative.

He was appointed business manager in 1989 at the age of 31 and re-elected twice more. He served on the Council on Industrial Relations, which works to solve disputes between local unions and signatory contractors, and was Finance Committee secretary at the 34th International Convention in 1991.

He joined the Sixth District office staff as an international representative in 1994, servicing locals in Indiana at first before moving to other states. In addition to Indiana, the Sixth District includes Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Ruhmkorff credits then-Vice President James P. Conway for allowing him to service non-construction locals from the start, which proved invaluable as his career progressed.

“He’s very special to me,” he said. “Him and [then-Secretary/Treasurer Jack F. Moore] were very good to me and helped me up the ladder. Without those two, I would probably still be twisting wire nuts on the east side of Indianapolis somewhere.”

Noble, his successor, said Ruhmkorff has a special ability to put people at ease when discussing difficult subjects.

“David has a good way of talking to members and helping them understand why it’s important to elect people who care about workers’ rights and how that affects their lives,” Noble said.

“He’s been a mentor and friend of mine since 1996 but I really got to know him when he was a servicing representative. When I was business manager of Local 702, he was the person I went to when I needed anything.”

Ruhmkorff plans to stay in the Indianapolis area and remain active in retirement. He is a member of the Capital Improvement Board, which oversees the Indiana Convention Center, Lucas Oil Stadium and other venues in the city. He previously served on the Mayor’s Labor Advisory Committee. He also served on the executive board for the Indiana AFL-CIO and the state’s Building Trades Council.

He also plans to continue regular visits to Ireland. Ruhmkorff is Irish on his mother’s side. Plus, there will be more time for his wife, daughters Mary Katherine and Colleen Celia, and their families.

Organized labor is poised for an upswing under President Biden and the infrastructure bill passed into law last year, Ruhmkorff said. He thinks it could be especially beneficial to manufacturing locals in the Midwest and will miss that.

Yet, he’s confident he’s departing at the right time.

“I’m at peace with the decision,” he said. “I’m looking forward to it.”

The officers and staff thank Brother Ruhmkorff for his many years of service and wish him a happy, long retirement. ■

APPOINTED

Paul A. Noble



Paul Noble, a second-generation IBEW journeyman wireman who rose to lead a large and diverse local before joining the international staff, took the helm of the Sixth District on April 1.

The International Executive Council appointed Noble to fill out the term of retiring International Vice President David Ruhmkorff.

Noble won hearty recommendations from both Ruhmkorff and International President Lonnie R. Stephenson, who was heading the Sixth District when he brought Noble aboard as an international representative in 2010.

“I first met Paul in 1991 at the Illinois State Conference. I was very impressed then by how dedicated he was to his local union and to the IBEW,” Stephenson said. “His business manager had just hired him as an organizer and he told me, ‘This young man, this Paul Noble, he’s an up and comer. He’ll be running our local someday.’”

Ruhmkorff was an international representative when he met Noble, then business manager of West Frankfort, Ill., Local 702.

“Paul’s just a great guy and he has the enthusiasm,” Ruhmkorff said. “He’s got good people skills and I think he’s a natural for the job. His experience serving multiple branches of the brotherhood made him an obvious choice. He’s the right age and can give it a go for quite a few years.”

For Noble, whose father was a journeyman wireman out of St. Louis Local 1, the IBEW has always been family. “I’ve been around it my whole life,” he said with pride. “The IBEW has provided food and shelter for me since I was born.”

During high school, Noble worked summers as a material handler and shop boy. He went on to attend the ITT Technical Institute in St. Louis and for a short time worked as a telecom service technician at Contel in Illinois, where he was represented by Local 702.

Within nine months, he’d decided to follow his father’s path and applied to Local 702 apprenticeship. He quickly became an activist.

“I would volunteer for anything,” he said. “If they had a picket, I’d walk the picket line; any volunteer project, the Labor Day parade, I was always involved.”

He was asked to join Local 702’s staff as an organizer not long after graduating as a journeyman, giving him a hand in expanding what is one of IBEW’s most sector-diverse locals.

As evidence, Stephenson pointed to the IBEW’s published directory. “Take a look at the book,” he said. “Local 702 has about every classification that’s covered in the IBEW.”

Noble said he was assigned initially to inside construction, “and then they asked me to become an organizer for the entire local — nurses, water plants, golf courses, small municipalities.”

One of his missions as business manager was to ensure that the wealth of units was also Local 702’s strength, and that issues were resolved collectively.

“Having everyone under one roof was to our advantage,” Noble said. “Traditionally, all those groups didn’t commingle, and we made a conscious effort to make them commingle.”

Stephenson praised Noble’s ability to do so, even while inside wiremen remained the lion’s share of the nearly 5,000-member local.

“As business manager, he was engaged with everyone — utility members, manufacturing groups, line clearance, it didn’t matter. He was a hands-on leader and very well respected in his local,” he said. “That’s why when I was appointed vice president of the Sixth District, I asked Paul to come on staff.”

Over the past dozen years, Noble’s work has included exhaustive efforts to pass state legislation critical to IBEW members and elect candidates who have their backs.

“You try to stay out of partisanship and stick to the facts,” he said. “You can look at any legislation that passes and see who supports you and who doesn’t support you. Building political power to become a better advocate for our members is the sole issue.”

Stephenson said Noble’s “great communication skills” are one of his biggest assets, down to the basic courtesy of returning phone calls.

“If someone needs to get a hold of him, he’s there,” he said. “He’s great at problem-solving. When someone needs help, they know they can go to Paul. I have no doubt he’ll continue to thrive and to grow the district, and I know he’s got the full support of the district. I think they’re very excited.”

As is Noble himself. “I just want to keep pushing the IBEW forward, keep building a better union,” he said. “I like the direction our leadership is taking us — diversity, organizing, politics, everything.”

Noble and his wife of 32 years, Gina, have two daughters, one of them an attorney and the other an accountant.

He noted that he’s worked far longer in union management than he did in the field as an electrician, but that, “it just fit. I feel like you wind up where you’re supposed to be, and I’m extremely happy.”

The IBEW congratulates Brother Noble on his well-earned promotion after decades of service to his union. ■

RETIRED

Brian Baker



International Representative Brian Baker has retired effective April 1. Born and raised in Elyria, Ohio, Brother Baker began his IBEW career

when he was initiated into Lorain Local 129 in 1987.

“The day I became a journeyman, it was the proudest day of my life,” Baker said.

On the advice of a fellow journeyman, he got involved in his local early on, serving as a steward. Then in 1997, he was appointed business manager. Under his leadership, the local organized several new contractors, growing from 380 members to 435.

In 2007, he was appointed by then-President Edwin D. Hill to serve as an international representative in what was then known as the Political Department. Within a few months, however, he was elevated to director, just in time for the 2008 presidential election that saw Barack Obama become president.

“It was amazing to see the first Black president and know that the IBEW helped make it happen,” Baker said.

As political director, he helped implement the IBEW’s grassroots political mobilization plan, recruiting registrars in nearly every local to sign up voters, and strengthened the union’s member-to-member networks to educate voters about working family issues.

“It was about, how do we bring other people up to our values, to give them what we already have,” he said.

In 2013, Baker was appointed special executive assistant to the international officers. In that role he worked with the officers and district offices in various capacities that had him traveling to IBEW conferences and progress meetings as well as working with his assigned department directors, among numerous other duties as needed.

Baker’s final role came in 2020 when he moved to the Construction Department to serve as an international representative. While there he worked on a number of issues, including project labor agreements, Davis-Bacon projects, jurisdictional disputes and grievances.

“Brian was a quiet professional who could be counted on to get the job done, no matter what he was working on,” said Construction Department Director Michael Richard. “He was very detail oriented and always focused on what was best for our members in the field. He’ll be missed for sure.”

Baker says he’s grateful to the IBEW for giving him the opportunity to represent the membership and to give them a voice. And of course, it allowed him to provide for his family.

“The IBEW has been the most

important thing in my life, outside of my wife," he said.

As for what he will miss the most about his career with the IBEW, it's the people, he said, the members as well as staff.

"I worked with some really great people," Baker said. "It's like they say, one person can't do everything, but together we can get a lot done."

Regardless of his role, Baker says he's always promoted the IBEW with the goal of bringing in as many people as possible.

"Titles don't mean as much as actions," he said. "There are labor theorists and labor practitioners. Be a practitioner. Practice labor, practice what your values are."

Baker will spend his retirement back home in Ohio where he says he'll still be involved in labor and politics. He also has nine granddaughters and a grandson that he plans to spend more time with.

On behalf of the entire union membership, the officers and staff wish Brother Baker a long and healthy retirement. ■

RETIRED

Kirk Brungard



After 40 years in the IBEW and the highest offices in the North American labor movement, former Director of Construction Membership

Development Kirk Brungard retired from his position as Senior Special Assistant to the President of the North American Building Trades effective March 1.

Brother Brungard followed his father, 50-year member Leo Brungard, into the IBEW.

Prior to his time at NABTU, Brungard was chief of staff for then-AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer and Portland, Ore., Local 125 member Liz Shuler for seven years.

"Kirk is one of the kindest, most dedicated labor activists around. Whether it's building an organizing strategy, training activists to avoid burnout, or developing an innovative partnership to grow our movement, Kirk's contributions have been immeasurable. Working with him at the IBEW and AFL-CIO has been an absolute joy and his impact will never be forgotten," said Shuler, who was appointed AFL-CIO president last August.

Brother Brungard joined Los Angeles Local 11's apprenticeship in 1982, after a handful of "disenchanted" semesters at UCLA.

"My dad loved the IBEW and was a huge proponent of the work," Brungard said. "He suggested I sign up. That decision changed my life."

For 15 years Brungard worked with the tools on projects small and great, but usually great. The highlight, he said, was the years he spent building and then doing upgrades and maintenance at Dream-

works Studios, the first new independent film studio in Hollywood for decades.

"It was an amazing time—the animation boom—and an amazing location along the L.A. River," Brungard said. "I was there long after the project was built, hanging out with the animators and just watching how the studio was built and led. It was a remarkable experience."

He also followed his father's lead in regular attendance at local meetings where he got to know the leadership. Eventually, he was asked to be a steward. When an organizing job opened at the hall in 1998, he was encouraged to apply. He did, and Brungard wasn't just hired to be an organizer; he began his life's calling as an evangelist for organized labor.

When Brungard speaks about organizing, his language drifts out of the secular world into the vocabulary of a revival tent, though his tone is gentle, and he is not the type to bang his fist or sermonize.

"A good organizer is a fisher of men and women, spreading the good news of better wages, working conditions and a better life at work," he said. "It is tantamount to discipleship; you really do have to believe in the spirit of labor. It is more than labor laws or charters; this is fellowship."

Inevitably he apologizes for the religious language, but if there is one thing that Brungard held true to from his first day as an organizer to his last official day on the job it is his unbreakable sincerity and humility, said Assistant to the International President for Membership Development Ricky Oakland.

"He is an organizer, believer and an extraordinary communicator," Oakland said. "He is such a vital part of what membership development is today. He's like my conscience and great friend."

At Local 11, Brungard helped develop what he believes to be one of the very first IBEW/NECA Business Development programs. This is but one example, he said, of how this proud son of the West believes the Ninth District has driven innovation in the IBEW.

"People joke about it, but the crazy stuff comes from the West and some of it has been very effective," he said. "But you have to remember that we were forced to be that way because we didn't have the market share and the history, the rules and power of our brothers out East. Even in L.A., that is considered such a leader now, we had to build it up and do it differently because the old playbook wouldn't work a second time."

Brungard was elected recording secretary in 1999 and then appointed as a local union organizer in 1998. It was about that time that he first met the two people who would change the course of his life, then-International President Ed Hill and Hill's then-senior executive assistant, Shuler.

"I was assigned to be their driver at the 2000 Democratic Convention," Brungard said. "Without going into a lot of detail, I think they liked my ability to navigate some tricky situations and get them, so to speak, where they needed to go."

In 2005, Hill appointed Brungard

to run the Construction Organizing Department.

It was a significant change, Brungard said. Numbers had been drifting down and organizing meetings were like "trips to the woodshed."

"Too many organizers sounded like lawyers or tough guys, and this punitive culture developed because of the lack of progress. It pained me that the enemy was usurping the high ground, attacking unions for restricting freedom. I wanted a different message: We are stronger together, we are on the side of justice, humility and equity," Brungard said. "Ed was committed enough to bring in something of a different tone."

In his five years, the falling numbers reversed. For the first time since the recession after 9/11, "A" membership began climbing.

Brungard said that when Shuler and Richard Trumka were elected in 2009 to Labor's top leadership posts, she asked him to come to the AFL for just six months. Hill wanted her to succeed and encouraged him to go.

"You don't say no to that. You do what is best for the IBEW and, for the second time, the international president is asking me to do a job," he said. "You don't say no."

At the AFL-CIO, Brungard assisted Shuler with the daily operations of seven of the administrative departments in Shuler's portfolio. It wasn't political or policy. It was accounting and facilities, the engine room that kept the organization running.

"Coming from the trades, we have an appreciation for that work. It was an opportunity to build and create excellence," he said.

Brungard served seven years at the very heights of the American labor movement.

But toward the end, he was flagging, he said. He was seeing the cost of the fervor and discipleship: burnout.

"The average organizer has a short shelf life," he said. "Discipleship is a flame."

In the "Take a handful of Advil and get back to work" ethos of the trades, burnout was not something many people wanted to talk about, let alone respect.

"It's not usually something that gets talked about in the building trades," he said. "But if we want to bring attention to the righteousness of the work of the organizer, we have to take seriously that it can be hard to put health and family first. We needed to know more."

Brungard began an investigation into burnout through the Building Trades Academy at Michigan State University, where he has been a teacher. A decade later, Brungard still regularly speaks about the costs of burnout and is a frequent speaker at other craft meetings and conventions.

"That says a lot about Kirk. It's not like the Bricklayers are asking me to speak," Oakland said with a laugh.

In 2016, Brungard left Shuler's side to take on a series of senior roles at the North American Building Trades council,

including running the Baltimore-Washington office and later leading the Canadian building trades through an unexpected vacancy at the top.

Brungard coordinated the search for his replacement. He said, in his vision—which he credits learning from Shuler—you lead by listening and putting other people in positions where they can be powerful.

"It's impossible to get to this point in one's own story without an alarming but fulfilling recognition of one's own insignificance and so much gratitude for what the people around me have contributed to my journey," he said. "I do believe our movement is righteous and the stars are aligning for us to take incredible strides. The labor movement in 40 years will look dramatically different but still steeped in these core beliefs." ■

DECEASED

Dennis Phelps



The officers are saddened to report that retired Government Employees Director Dennis Phelps died Feb. 23.

Brother Phelps was born in 1951 in Charles County, Md., a Washington, D.C., suburb. As a child, he overcame paralysis from polio and went on not only to play competitive sports but also to join the Boy Scouts and rise to the rank of Eagle Scout.

After graduating from La Plata High School, Phelps attended Saint Leo University in Florida before returning to the national capital area, where in 1970 he was initiated into Washington Local 26

as a residential apprentice.

Within a few years of topping out, Phelps found steady work as an electrician for D.C.'s St. Elizabeth's Hospital. An eventual move to work for the U.S. Government Printing Office, though, necessitated a transfer of membership to Washington Local 121. Within just six months there, Phelps quickly began serving his fellow members as the local's chief shop steward.

Current Local 121 Business Manager Bill Blevins knew Phelps for many years. "Dennis was the most hardheaded of anyone I ever met," Blevins said, admiringly. "When he wanted something, he went after it. It was a passion for him."

In 1990, Phelps was elected president and business manager of Local 121, which by then had expanded to represent members at the U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing, one of a small number of government employers that allow employees to bargain for wages separately from the federal government's General Services Administration classifications.

"For Local 121 to survive, Dennis knew what we had to do," Blevins said.

Getting the federal government to allow Local 121 members to bargain over wages, benefits and working conditions—a "special status" with the federal government—was something for which Phelps had to constantly fight. Otherwise, these specially-skilled workers could easily be lured away by more lucrative, private-sector work.

"We had to negotiate wages regularly, about every five years," Blevins said.

One particularly brutal battle was Local 121's multi-year, and ultimately successful, court fight to defend the collective-bargaining rights of workers at the Bureau of Engraving. This was quite

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TRANSITIONS *continued*

difficult under Ronald Reagan's administration — already notorious for firing striking air traffic controllers in 1981 — that was bent on forcing bureau workers to follow the federal GSA's wage-and-benefits model. After years in the courts followed by more years of negotiations, bureau workers achieved their first wage agreement in 1998.

"If we couldn't negotiate, we would've been paid a lot less," Phelps told the *Electrical Worker* in 2017. "When I was there, we kept wages within \$1 of Local 26 rates, and with benefits."

As Local 121's leader, Phelps also lobbied on Capitol Hill against privatizing work at the Government Printing Office, publishers of the daily *Congressional Record* and the *Federal Register*.

In 2007, then-International President Edwin D. Hill appointed Phelps an international representative assigned to the Government Employees Department, a move Phelps described as "very rewarding."

"I thought I could use my expertise with government laws to support more members than just those at my local," Phelps said in 2017.

Tens of thousands of IBEW members in the U.S. and Canada are government employees working for federal agencies, including the Departments of Energy and Interior and on shipyards, navigational locks and dams and power generating plants.

Later appointed the department's director, Phelps helped guide the move of electricians employed by the Architect of the Capitol and by the National Institute of Standards and Technology from Local 26's jurisdiction into Local 121's. "Dennis really helped that along," Blevins said.

Phelps also represented the IBEW in the United Defense Workers Coalition and the Federal Workers Alliance, and he served as secretary-treasurer for the Maryland AFL-CIO executive committee.

Additionally, Phelps was as an alternate delegate on the Office of Personnel Management's Federal Prevailing Rate Advisory Committee, a member of the Department of Labor's Federal Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health, and an alternate member of the Department of Defense's wage-setting committee.

For four years, Phelps also served on the board of directors of Jude House, a substance abuse recovery program, including two years as president. Active in Charles County politics, Phelps served for eight years, two as chair, on the county's Democratic Central Committee, helping candidates at various levels win their elections — including the 1981 campaign of Rep. Steny Hoyer of Maryland, who now serves as the House Majority Leader.

"Whenever Dennis took on a fight, I don't think I ever saw him go in half-way," Blevins said.

"Devoted civil servants who go in and do their job don't deserve to be bad-mouthed," Phelps said in 2017. "Let them be good civil servants and pay them fairly."

Phelps was preceded in death by his father and first wife, Mary Frances Shlagel. He is survived by his mother; his wife, Yong; and a large family that includes six siblings, five children, five grandchildren and one great-granddaughter.

The officers and staff of the IBEW send their deepest condolences to Brother Phelps's family and friends. ■

DECEASED

Mary N. O'Brien



Mary Nell O'Brien, an IBEW trailblazer and activist who broke barriers in her native Mississippi and at the International Office in Wash-

ington, died March 19 at the age of 76.

Sister O'Brien began her long and extraordinary career in labor in the late 1960s when she worked to organize the Presto Manufacturing plant where she worked in Jackson, Miss., assembling pressure cookers for Sunbeam and Sears. Hired as a line assembler in August 1965, her very employment presented enormous challenges. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 had only just banned discrimination in the workplace, and Mississippi was among the most hostile places in the U.S. for women of color, especially in nontraditional occupations like manufacturing.

But O'Brien had a vision for how a workplace could operate, and with her co-workers, she formed a union and founded Jackson Local 2262 in 1970. She served as the local's founding financial secretary and as a member of the Negotiating Committee and numerous times as a delegate to the Mississippi AFL-CIO Convention and the Mississippi Electrical Workers Association.

O'Brien didn't waste time seeking to create change in her new union home. At the 1974 International Convention in Kansas City, Mo., she and a small group of like-minded delegates noted that in a room of 3,000-some delegates fewer than 100 were Black.

"We didn't think that was right," said Robbie Sparks, the former business manager of Atlanta Local 2127, who with O'Brien and others, founded the IBEW Minority Caucus following that convention. The group would later grow into what is today the Electrical Workers Minority Caucus.

"Mary was very loyal to the IBEW, but she wanted very badly for it to live up to its potential and to be a place that welcomed people no matter what the color of their skin or who they knew," Sparks said.

In 1978, Sister O'Brien was appointed an international representative assigned to the Manufacturing Department at the International Office. She was the first Black woman to serve as an international representative in the union's

history, and as such, she was a symbol whether she intended to be or not.

"It was great to see a person who looked like Mary as an international rep," Sparks said. "But she also used her platform to push for change for the next 20 years."

"She wanted very badly for [the IBEW] to live up to its potential and be a place that welcomed people no matter what the color of their skin or who they knew."

— Former *Electrical Workers Minority Caucus President Robbie Sparks*

Among her most passionate causes was her belief that success in the IBEW should be based on merit rather than who a person knew. And she dedicated much of the next two decades to ensuring that young minority trade unionists had the training and opportunities to be successful.

Through organizations like the A. Philip Randolph Institute for African-American trade unionists, the Coalition of Labor Union Women and the Opportunities Industrialization Center, she rarely said no to service on executive boards and committees and regularly taught training workshops for young labor activists.

Sister O'Brien came to Washington, but she never lost sight of what she'd faced at home in Mississippi, not just as a labor leader but as a young Black person fighting for causes she believed in.

In a 2012 interview with the *Electrical Worker*, O'Brien recalled attending meetings with Claude Ramsey, the white leader of the Mississippi AFL-CIO, where she had to lie down in the back seat of his car to avoid being seen and drawing white supremacist violence.

She believed that voting rights and labor rights were intertwined, especially in the South, and fought powerfully to ensure that members of her community were not denied either.

"I can't believe some people today are so nonchalant about their voting rights," she said at the time, recalling being accompanied by a federal marshal to register to vote in the 1960s.

That experience registering voters, educating them on the issues and getting them to polls, often under threats of violence and intimidation, molded her into the powerful advocate she became, both within the IBEW and in the labor movement as a whole.

"Mary was a thoughtful and friendly woman who always had a smile and a

positive attitude," said Royetta Sanford, a member of Los Angeles Local 18 who served as the first Black director at the International Office. "I will always remember Mary as a courageous, brave and dedicated sister who strove on so many levels to improve the lives of workers, particularly people of color and women."

In her role in the Manufacturing Department, O'Brien coordinated collective bargaining agreements with national employers that had contracts with multiple local unions and served on the Documentation/Assessment Committee of the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council.

"Her background says it all," Sanford said. "In her early adult years, as a fledgling union leader, she fought for the rights of workers in her home state of Mississippi. She left home and all she knew and loved to work in Washington, D.C., in an organization that did not fully appreciate or respect people of color. She worked diligently through the years as an international rep and her dedication and service helped to change the face of the IBEW."

The officers and staff extend their heartfelt condolences to Sister O'Brien's husband, Hank, and son, Edgar, and thank them for sharing her with us for so long. Her impact went far beyond the duties of her job assignment; she pushed the union she loved to do better for all of its members and to live up to its loftiest ideals, and we are grateful for her contribution. ■

RETIRED

Clif Davis



International Representative Clif Davis retired from his post in the Business Development Department effective April 1, ending a distinguished career of more three decades, particularly in the Pacific Northwest.

Brother Davis took a longer path to becoming an inside journeyman wireman than most. He was a newspaper carrier in his Portland, Ore., neighborhood for much of his childhood. After high school graduation, he followed his father into the grocery business, where he was a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers briefly before moving into management for Fred Meyer, a chain of supermarkets on the West Coast. He worked there for 12 years, followed by a three-year stint at Frito-Lay.

Then, in 1988, Davis saw an advertisement in the *Oregonian*, the newspaper he delivered as a child, announcing Portland Local 48 was accepting applications for apprentices. Davis, an amateur mechanic who already was renovating old cars, decided to apply.

"I could see with my education level and background, the opportunities at Frito-Lay, even though it was a great company, were somewhat limited," he said.

He received a response a few weeks afterwards. Davis was the last person selected in the 68-member class, he said.

"I was not afraid of work," he said. "Never have been. That's what got me through the [apprenticeship] interview."

Davis earned an associate degree from Portland Community College during his apprenticeship because he thought it would help meet his goal of being a project manager more quickly. He was working as a general foreman for Christenson Electric not long after topping out in 1993.

Retired Local 48 member Dennis Bailey, the first journeyman Davis worked under as an apprentice, said his aptitude for repairing cars helped him quickly adapt to being an electrician. So did a willingness to listen to more experienced members and asking good questions.

"He was a foreman on quite a few jobs," Bailey said. "He understands things, he's decent to talk to and he doesn't get riled up. He's pretty smooth about everything he does."

Davis later became an instructor at Local 48's training center, teaching night classes while continuing to work in the field. In 1996, he joined the staff full-time as an organizer and became a business representative in 2001. Davis said he was reluctant step away from jobsites but he quickly learned he enjoyed negotiating contracts.

In 2007, he won a contested election to become business manager.

"From the day I started my campaign, I made it clear that I believe in cooperation with our contractors," Davis said. "You're there to represent the members and fight for the best deal, but those relationships had gone from amicable to non-existent. It was hurting our members and we had to address that."

Davis, in turn, found that some of the sales techniques he learned in his earlier jobs paid off in his role as business manager, especially when the economy cratered in 2008.

"I advertised for the local, I got us on radio, I did everything I could possibly do going back to my retail and sales experience to let the membership know we were doing everything we can to help them," he said.

Davis was re-elected in 2010 and was preparing to run for another term in 2013 when then-International President Edwin D. Hill asked him to join the Business Development Department. He was hesitant at first because Local 48 was coming out of the recession and preparing to celebrate its 100th anniversary.

But in the end, he was intrigued at joining a new, nationwide initiative designed to ensure customers that IBEW members and signatory contractors were the right choice. Davis represented the Ninth District, which includes Oregon, Washington, California, Nevada, Alaska and Hawaii.

"There's an understanding among

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the districts and the business development group that what happens in Tennessee can impact a relationship in Portland or anywhere else," Davis said. "Relationships are not just a local issue. They are broad and they are nationwide. Our group of 10, 11 or 12 people is constantly communicating across the United States."

Business Development Director Ray Kasmark, who joined the department at the same time, called Davis "Mr. Reliable."

"If you need something, you don't have to worry about it. You put Cliff on it," he said.

Kasmark said he will especially remember Davis' persistence, a trait he likely learned in his life before the IBEW and also working as an organizer.

"You can't be afraid of hearing no," Kasmark said. "You usually don't sell something on the first try. You can't be afraid to go back to the well and make another run at it and Cliff never was afraid."

In retirement, Davis plans to spend more time with his wife, Theresa; his five children, including son Troy, who also is a Local 48 member and works as a journeyman foreman for EC Electric; and six grandchildren. Geoff Barry, his son-in-law, also is a Local 48 member.

The officers and staff thank Brother Davis for his many years of service and wish him a long and happy retirement. ■

RETIRED

Brian Heins



Eleventh District Organizing Coordinator Brian Heins, a longtime leader in Professional and Industrial Organizing retired May 1.

"He's always the smart guy in the group," P&I Director of Organizing Jammi Ouellette said of the man known among his peers as "The Professor." "Brian is very analytical. You look at him and you can see the wheels turning."

"He's a thinker. If you want to learn something, you call on The Professor."

A native of Postville, Iowa, in the far northeast corner of the state, Brother Heins moved to Cedar Rapids, about 85 miles south, shortly after getting married. In 1990, he was hired by avionics manufacturer Rockwell Collins, where he became a member of Coralville, Iowa, Local 1634 the following year.

It was a perfect fit for Heins, who learned the value of unions and dignity on the job while growing up from his grandfather, a member of the meatpacker's union.

"I had worked nonunion jobs as a very young man and I didn't like how the employer treated us employees," he said. "I've always had an empathy for people who weren't treated well on the job. It costs nothing to treat people well, even if the pay and benefits are not great."

Heins' assignment at Rockwell Collins was to help build radio technology. He wasted no time in getting involved in Local 1634, volunteering to work on the local's newsletter during his first year of membership.

"Anything that I could do to make the union stronger and more active in the community, I would do it," he said. "As often as I could, I would take the family and we would do those things together, whether it was going to Labor Day picnics or taking them to the picket line when other unions were on strike."

Other opportunities followed. He went on to serve as a safety representative, steward and vice president. He was appointed business manager to fill an unexpired term in 2002 and was re-elected without opposition in 2004.

In 2007, he accepted a position to join the Membership Development department as a lead organizer and was promoted to regional coordinator in 2010. The Eleventh District consists of Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

"A lot of times, you would get a call from someone wanting to organize and you would have that first meeting with a handful of employees," said Per Capita Director Louis Spencer, a former Eleventh District organizer who worked closely with Heins before moving to the International Office in Washington, D.C. "Brian has the ability to read people's body language when you are in that room with them. He could read if it was going to be a potentially successful campaign, or it was just one person's grievances."

Spencer added that he "tries to use [Heins'] leadership style in my current position. He does a good job of reading everyone's personality and treats everyone with dignity and respect."

Heins has been involved in several successful campaigns during the last 20 years, including one that led to IBEW membership for nearly 300 municipal workers in Springfield, Mo., in 2015.

But a personal highlight was the successful organization effort of 1,400 BGE employees in 2017, which led to the creation of Baltimore Local 410. The drive took nearly two decades and Heins was one of many organizers called in from around the country to assist.

"I was fortunate enough to play a small part in that and it was just amazing," he said. "It's a textbook case of the IBEW at its best."

"There's a lot of wins and losses over the years, but what I take from it was the team environment. The house calling, hand billing and everything in the field an organizer has to do. Brothers and sisters out working toward the same goal is what I'll always take from my career."

In retirement, Heins plans to keep his home in Cedar Rapids and spend more time with his wife, Ivy, and adult sons, Michael and Nicholas. He also hopes to spend more time gardening, one of his favorite hobbies, and to volunteer with the IBEW and other unions when there is a need.

"Brian is a dedicated brother to the IBEW," Ouellette said. "He's a great leader who always leads by example. He's always a pleasure and anytime you get in the trenches with him, it's a good thing."

The officers and staff thank Brother Heins for his many years of service and wish him and his family a long and happy retirement. ■

RETIRED

Tony Maghrak



Tony Maghrak, a Sixth District international representative who spent the past 12 years working with locals in Minnesota and its border regions,

has retired after more than four decades with the IBEW.

A native of Minneapolis, Maghrak spent up to four days at a time on the road traveling his state and "bouncing into the Dakotas, and a little overlap in Wisconsin," mainly servicing inside construction locals.

"Tony is a kind and decent man whose experience as a training director and business manager gave him a keen insight into the administration of a local union," said former Sixth District International Vice President David Ruhmkorff, now serving as a special assistant to the international president. "His attention to detail made my job easy when it came to making decisions on local union issues."

Growing up, Maghrak had an aptitude for craftsmanship and soared through his high school's industrial arts programs. By his senior year, he said he was assisting his teacher in drafting, electronics and woodworking classes.

He loved woodworking above all and dreamed of an apprenticeship in Europe after graduating. But with a dozen siblings, his family's budget only stretched so far.

In hindsight, there were signs pointing to his future career, Maghrak said, recalling two dramatic events.

Around age 9, he was stunned by flashes of pink and white when his father got up on an aluminum ladder after an electrical fire in their home's basement. "My dad was going to clean up some dead wires after the fire and he almost electrocuted himself," he said.

He experienced that for himself as a teenager while making mischief with his buddies. Climbing to the roof of a hardware store to lob snowballs at buses, a jolt of electricity shot through him when he grabbed the shroud of an exhaust fan and an icy metal gutter. For a scary moment, "I was stuck. I couldn't let go."

"I have great respect for electricity," he said with a laugh. But he didn't see a career path until his father asked what was going to do after his hopes for Europe fell through.

"I said I wanted to do something that's going to be around for a while. He said, 'Look up at the ceiling. See those light fixtures? Look over at the wall. See those light switches? There's always going to be electricity,'" Maghrak said. "My dad passed away shortly after that."

He set his sights on a technical school's electrical program. Despite a two-year wait list, he lucked into an opening and was able to ditch his second choice, radio and TV repair. Soon he and his classmates were getting pitches from the IBEW.

He liked what he heard, but figured the odds were against him. Another vocational school in town was more prestigious, and he had no family legacy in the trades. But he made his case and started his Local 292 apprenticeship in September 1980.

At union meetings, he gained a reputation as a gadfly. "I wasn't belligerent, but I'd go up to the mic and say, 'Why are we doing that this way, why couldn't we do it that way?'"

Eventually, local leaders put him to work as the recording secretary, appointed him to unexpired terms on the executive board and ultimately named him training director, a position he held for 13 years.

He excelled at it, said Local 292 Business Manager Jeff Heimerl, who was one of his apprentices and later a staff representative — a hire Maghrak made right after defeating Heimerl and three others to become business manager in 2008.

"Working for Tony was a wonderful experience, and I learned a lot from him," he said. "He analyzes everything and always made thoughtful and calculated decisions benefiting members."

He had the same approach as a service representative, Heimerl said, calling him "an educator at heart."

"Whenever I had a question, Tony was always there," he said. "One of the ways he did that was often answering my questions with more questions, forcing me to take a deeper dive into the subject matter of my inquiry."

Maghrak took the job with barely a week's notice after a May 2010 call from the late International President Ed Hill. "I was in negotiations for our main inside agreement and I asked him if I could start July 1 instead of June 1. He said, 'What part of June 1 don't you understand?'"

Whether a long trek at least once a month to his state's northern regions or a shorter hop to urban locals, he said it was deeply satisfying being able to help members and locals. Sometimes he still does. "As I ease into retirement, I still get the odd call here and there seeking advice, and I'm happy to help," he said.

Maghrak and his wife, Sandra, have two sons and a daughter. In addition to more family time, retirement means freedom to dive back into his hobbies, especially woodworking. This spring he said he was building a large shed to house his work room.

The IBEW thanks brother Maghrak for his years of dedicated service and wishes him a long and happy retirement. ■

LOCAL LINES

Busy Spring and a Summer Ride

L.U. 1 (as,c,ees,ei,em,es,et,fm,i,mt,ptc,rts,s,se,spa,st&ws), ST. LOUIS, MO — Greetings one and all: First, we say happy trails to retiring brother and longtime instructor at our JATC, Dave Holmes, who spent 39 years as a journeyman wireman and 21 years teaching. Put away the books and hang up the tools. Congratulations!

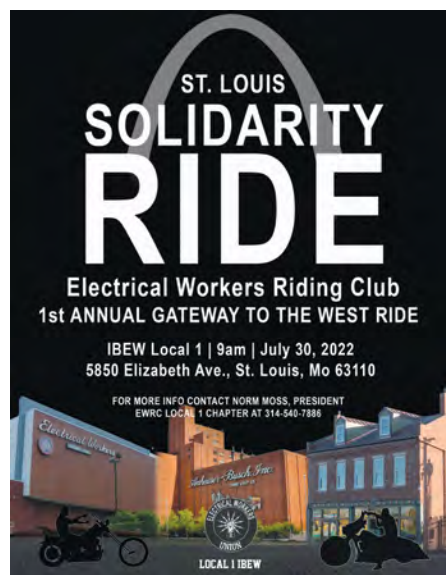
Local 1 has had a busy spring. On March 19, our RENEW chapter threw a sold-out trivia night at the hall. A great evening of fellowship and fun was had by all.

On April 23, Local 1 tackled its annual Rebuild St. Louis event with enthusiasm. Local members donated their time and our NECA partners supplied service trucks and material. We fanned out in the community to help many homes that are in much need of repair. Some of the homes belong to elderly and disabled citizens who can't do these repairs themselves.

The negotiating committee appreciates all the recommendations from the membership to the soon expiring inside agreement. They are busy negotiating and hopefully will have a contract to recommend to the membership very soon.

Finally, the Electrical Workers Riding Club introduces its first annual Gateway to the West ride, which will take place on July 30. For more information, please contact Norm Moss, president of the EWRC Local 1 chapter, at 314-540-7886.

Kyle Hunter, P.S.



The Local 1 chapter of the Electrical Workers Riding Club has scheduled its first annual Gateway to the West ride, rolling out on July 30.

Celebrating 2020-2021 Apprentice Graduates

L.U. 11 (em,i,rts&spa), LOS ANGELES, CA — We were finally able to celebrate our 2020 and 2021 apprentice graduates with a much-deserved indoor ceremony and dinner. Our 2020 graduating class included 177 inside wiremen, 28 sound & communications and seven intelligent transportation members. Our 2021 graduating class included 267 inside wireman, three residential wireman, 18 sound & communications and 12 intelligent transportation workers. As these graduates endured various changes in their school setting during the pandemic, we are happy to say they were able to stay the course and turn out as journeyman in their respective classifications. We wish them and their families health and wellness.

Last year we were able to open two new offices in the eastern and western parts of Los Angeles County to better serve our members who reside in those areas. Our members can now take a call from one of five Local 11 dispatch offices in our jurisdiction. At our main administrative office we have added 70 kilowatts of photovoltaics on the roof to take advantage of renewable energy.

We will start our negotiations with NECA soon and hope to have a successful and amicable contract.

Robert Corona, P.S.

Brother Sam Studer Retires

L.U. 15 (u), DOWNERS GROVE, IL — Assistant Business Manager Sam Studer retired Jan. 28 after 38 years of service to the local and ComEd. Sam began his career with ComEd as a station laborer on March 22, 1983, and worked until 1989, when he started his overhead career by attending overhead 500-volt school in Joliet, Ill. Sam became a journeyman line-man in March of 1992 and crew leader in Sept. 2003.

Sam never looked back when the opportunity to step into a steward's role presented itself in Feb. 2006 and as chief steward in June 2010. During his tenure in these roles, Sam earned a reputation as an ardent and passionate defender of the union. Sam's dedication led to his being named Local 15 Southern Region's business representative on Jan. 1, 2012, and assistant business manager on Aug. 5, 2019. He was assigned to be a point person for safety for Local 15 and has been our prominent voice for The Electrical Worker for the last five years, writing and submitting articles.

While we will miss Sam's dedication and positive attitude, all of us at the Local 15 office would like to wish Sam and his family a long and healthy retirement.

J. Collins, Bus. Rep.

Local 41 to Celebrate 125 Years

L.U. 41 (i,se,es,em&spa), BUFFALO, NY — This year on Sept. 16, our local will be 125 years old. We will be posting old photos on our social media throughout the year. If you have a unique photo you would like us to share, give us a call and we'll see what we can do.

Please keep an eye out for information regarding our 125th anniversary dinner, which will be held on Oct. 29, 2022, at the Hyatt Regency, Downtown Buffalo. It should be a grand time and worthwhile celebration for Local 41.

We are always looking for softball players for Local 41's team. We play in the building trades league on Mondays or Tuesdays. Contact the union office for more info.

Hope all is well; be safe; test before you touch, and we look forward to seeing many of you on October 29!

Gregory R. Inglut, P.S.

Updates and Upcoming Events

L.U. 47 (lctt,mo,o,u&uow), DIAMOND BAR, CA — Greetings brothers and sisters, and please note the following updates from our local:

- SCE general wage increase for 2022 — A 4% increase was voted on Jan. 21 and passed by 68%. Air-ops mechanics voted in favor of first-time contract; congratulations and welcome.
- Construction field forces — We are waiting for management to respond to the union's latest proposal.
- Distribution operation center — Supervisor and operations-supervisor positions met with the company on Jan. 21 for the third day of bargaining, with no progress made.
- City of Riverside — Bargaining continues.
- City of Colton Electric Utility — We are starting the impasse process, and we have an update meeting scheduled with the city.
- City of Banning — Negotiations took place on March 22 for both contracts expiring July 22.
- City of Vernon — Bargaining started on March 22 for the contract that expires July 22.
- Recent/Upcoming events — The Local 47 steward conference will be held on March 5; and the local's picnic on June 4, with fishing trips to come.

We're sad to report the deaths of Andrew Bonanno, David Dewoody, Jacob Lopez, Rainer Shiels and David Terlizzi. Our condolences and prayers are with their loved ones.

Work safe & buy union!

Mitch Smith, P.S.

Get Out and Vote Your Contract

L.U. 51 (catv,lctt,o,ptc,rtb,t,u&uow), SPRINGFIELD, IL — The local has been meeting with Vistra over effects bargaining on the closure of the Edwards Power Station in Bartonville, Ill. Edwards generates approximately 780 megawatts. This closure will affect about 70 total jobs.

Construction transmission and wind-farm work is steady and will pick up this spring. Line-clearance tree trimming continues to be at full employment.

In 2022, we have contract negotiations with the city of Bushnell, city of Princeton, city of Geneseo, IL Teledata, Custom Underground, 6-51-C, city of Sullivan, village of Chatham, village of Riverton, village of Rantoul, Ameren, Spoon River, Wireless USA and IBEW-NECA Benefits Administration. When a tentative agreement is reached with all of these properties, please get out and vote your contract.

Please be safe.

Karlene Knisley, Bus. Rep.

Local 55 Celebrates 125th Anniversary

L.U. 55 (c,lctt,o&u), DES MOINES, IA — Hello brothers and sisters: The local had its 125th anniversary banquet on Saturday, Feb. 5 at Prairie Meadows Casino and Race Track in Altoona, Iowa. We had over 250 members and guests present. Ed Kooker was awarded his 60-year pin, but I failed to get a picture of him. He has been a member for almost half of our years as a local. There were lots of prizes given out, and we had a wonderful prime rib dinner and an open bar. The food was great! Everyone who was there was given a sack with a celebration shirt and some other goodies too! Our officers did an outstanding job of making it a beautiful evening and a fine way to celebrate our 125th year.



Local 55 President Dave Turner presents a 50-year pin to Press Secretary Myron Green.

Submitting Local Lines Articles

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

Trade Classifications

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

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.

By the time you read this the grass will be green and we will be mowing the yard. Remember to think of safety at home just as you do at work. Stay healthy and see you next time!

Myron Green, P.S.

Retirees Winter Luncheon, St. Patrick's Day Parade Return

L.U. 103 (cs&i), BOSTON, MA — With COVID-19 hopefully in the rearview mirror, some of our local's best events are taking place in 2022. In March, we held our 8th annual retirees' winter luncheon in Naples, Fla. More than 200 retirees and guests enjoyed a day of reminiscing with old friends over lunch at the Naples Grande Beach Resort, with many returning the next day for a round of golf. Business Manager Lou Antonellis gave his state of the union address to all in attendance to bring them up-to-date on what has been happening over the past year in their local union. The luncheon is one of the most successful events held each year, and we are looking forward to next year's!

The annual St. Patrick's Day Parade was held for the first time since 2019 in Boston, and Local 103 members joined in on the fun with their float and treats for those along the parade route.

We are also looking forward to holding our apprentice graduation in person this year, but not before heading to Chicago for the 40th International Convention!

Jimmy Fleming, P.S.

Join in Your Local Union Election

L.U. 111 (o,u,em,spa,rtb&lctt), DENVER, CO — Sisters and brothers, I hope this finds you in good health and spirits. May is traditionally the beginning of summer and the construction season. As temperatures rise during the day, please stay hydrated, take breaks often, watch each other and keep safety as your No. 1 priority. Attend and participate in your tailboards, ask questions and be clear about the task at hand.

Also in May, Local 111 will send your elected delegation to the IBEW International Convention in Chicago. The International Executive Council postponed the event one year due to the pandemic; and the delegates are eager and honored to represent you as they elect the international president and secretary-treasurer, district officers and the executive council.

This May, we will also elect our local union officers, Executive Board and Inside and Outside Construction Examining Committees. Please take time to participate in our democratic process by voting and returning your ballot on time. If you have not received a ballot or have questions, please contact Election Judge Rocco Alberti at 303-744-7171, extension 7410.

Patrick S. Quinn, P.S.

Solidarity is Needed

L.U. 125 (lctt,o&u), PORTLAND, OR — Negotiations continue to dominate the landscape at the local. Please attend your unit meetings and keep working with your reps to understand what is happening. Pay attention to communications from the local. We may need your help in raising awareness on various fronts as we try to reach tentative agreement on our agreements. Solidarity is needed, and we hope that we can count on you.

Congratulations to Randy Bryson, Ray Cowell, Joe Gass, Marcy Grail, Travis Hefely, John Howard, Jude Jolma and Hank Williams. They will be joining Business Manager Travis Eri and President Larry

Browning at the International Convention in Chicago. Our delegation will be active participants in this conference and expect to return with plenty of information to share. The convention will be held in May.

The Pacific Northwest Lineman's Rodeo will be held on July 23. Join us as a spectator, competitor or volunteer!

Marcy Grail, A.B.M.

Local 139 Fundraiser Supports Area NICU

L.U. 139 (i&u), ELMIRA, NY — Our local and Patrick's Bar of Elmira, N.Y., partnered with the Children's Miracle Network to raise money for the Arnot Medical Center NICU. Celebrity bartenders included International Representative Ernie Hartman, Business Manager Warren Roman and retired organizer David Blauvelt. Thanks to the generosity of Local 139 members, family and friends, we were able to raise more than \$1,500 in just three hours!

Nick Ahearn, Bus. Rep.



Business Manager Warren Roman join Emily Blauvelt, International Representative Ernie Hartman, Molly Drake and Dave Blauvelt to raise money for the Arnot Medical Center NICU.

Celebrating 2020-2021 Apprentice Graduates

L.U. 141 (ees,i,o,u), WHEELING, WV — Greetings, brothers and sisters: Work in our jurisdiction remains slow, with 94 members on Book 1. Our unemployed members are very thankful for the work opportunities that continue to be available in various locals within the Third and Fourth Districts.

In January, Local 141 hosted a dinner at the Wheeling Island Racetrack Casino celebrating the apprentice graduating classes of 2020 and 2021. Class of 2020 graduates are Ian Aston, Cody Bishop, Greg Boone, Jeffery Coole, Daniel Criswell, Zachary Morell, Brandon Snider, Jeff Trigg and Sean Vannest. Class of 2021 graduates are Glenn Bonar, Madison Cumpston, Derek Donahue, Andrew Ellis, Matthew Gregorcic, Matthew Hill, Dylan Johnson, Jayson LaRoche and Thomas Orth. Congratulations to all of these new journeyman wiremen!

Local 141 is saddened by the passing of Brother Wallace "Wally" Majors. He will be sadly missed. Please stay safe and healthy.

Kurt "Bug" Reed, P.S.



Local 141 classes of 2020 and 2021: (front row) Brandon Snider, Madison Cumpston, Derek Donahue, Andrew Ellis and Matthew Gregorcic; (back row) Sean Vannest, Greg Boone, Zachary Morrell, Matthew Hill, Dylan Johnson, Jason LaRoche, Thomas Orth, Jeffrey Coole, Cody Bishop and Jeff Trigg. Graduates not pictured: Ian Aston, Daniel Criswell and Glenn Bonar.



Despite winter cold and snow, Local 159 members and Sixth District organizers stood with UW Hospital nurses, picketing together for recognition of the nurses' union.

Local 159 Stands with Nurses at University Hospital

L.U. 159 (i), MADISON, WI — Work is starting to pick up again, a welcome sign of spring. We will need many extra hands across the local this summer, including at the 300-megawatt Badger Hollow Solar Farm. Our work outlook is excellent through 2022 and beyond.

We had a visit from IBEW organizers who were here for the Sixth District Organizers Boot Camp at the UW-Madison School for Workers. We put boots on the ground together to stand with the nurses at UW Health/University Hospital. The nurses have been fighting for management to voluntarily recognize their union. Since losing their union in the wake of Act 10, the nurses have battled staffing shortages and quality-of-care issues. Hospital management cites Act 10 as the reason they are not required to recognize the union.

Business Agent Lisa Goodman was elected a trustee on our Building Trades Council Executive Board. She is believed to be the first woman to serve on that body.

Our members who are state employees finally received their long-overdue wage increases.

We look forward to a busy summer.

Sue Blue, B.M.



Members replacing lights at the Boys & Girls Club, including (left to right) Ryan Saddler, Stevie Anthony, Matt Strupp, Phelan Kelly, Colton Thoennes and Sam Vetiya.

Apprentices, Journeymen Upgrade Lighting for Boys & Girls Club

L.U. 197 (es&i), BLOOMINGTON, IL — Our work picture for the spring and into the summer looks very positive. We anticipate needing a couple hundred journeymen to help our local meet our manpower needs. The Rivian auto plant has a couple of nice-sized expansions that should be manning up by summer. There are also new projects coming up at Heartland Community College, Illinois State University and the city of Bloomington Public Library expansion and water park. Our members have been doing a great job and so have the travelers that have helped us. Let's continue to seize the opportunity to secure work for members, and in turn our families will reap the benefits for years to come. Give eight for eight and be professional and there should be no reason we can't continue to succeed. The IBEW represents the best and most qualified electricians there are, and we take a lot of pride in that.

Our members know how important it is to give back to the community. In February, apprentices and journeymen answered the call to help the local Boys & Girls Club with a much-needed lighting upgrade. These members gave up time normally spent with their families and turned down work at premium pay on Saturdays to help the community. New efficient LED lights replaced the 30-something-year-old energy-sucking fixtures in the classrooms, cafeteria and gymnasium. The kids deserve classrooms that are well lit, and repairs saved the club thousands of dollars they in turn can use to invest in the kids. Thanks to Stevie Anthony, Josh Bertolet, Hayden Bowlin, Dexter Brown, Larry Carroll, Victor Davis, Gabriel Ediker, Dale Glasscock, Ryan Hambleton, Phelan Kelly, Mike Longfellow, Tom Peasley, Andy Prochnow, Ryan Saddler, Jordan Shickel, Matt Strupp, Colton Thoennes, Sam Vetiya and Antron Zimmel for volunteering.

Remember to get involved in the local and stay involved!

Mike Raikes, B.M./F.S.

Powered with Pride

L.U. 237 (i&r), NIAGARA FALLS, NY — The start of 2022 picked up where 2021 left off, with a strong work outlook through winter and into spring. An increase in cryptocurrency mining centers and solar fields were a major contributor, as well as substantial long-term projects at New York Power Authority in Lewiston. We are hopeful and optimistic the strong work outlook continues throughout 2022.

In addition to our members experiencing a strong work outlook, we have also completed the purchase of a former grade school that will serve as Local 237's new training facility and union hall. This has long been a dream and a continued effort for our members. We have previously used various locations to facilitate our training center, the most recent being the Niagara Falls High School. The new training center and union hall is 10,000 square feet and is

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conveniently located in a hamlet of Bergholtz, a small town within close proximity to Niagara Falls. This new facility gives us much to celebrate as we can now offer more hands-on training and continued education needed to ensure the demand for skilled journeymen and apprentices is met; it also gives us additional means to entice new membership. We would like to express our most sincere appreciation and gratitude to all members who were vital in the purchase of the property and the renovations needed for a functional training facility and union hall. This would not have been possible without those who sacrificed and worked tirelessly to ensure the brothers and sisters of this local have a bright future.

L.U. 237's annual dinner dance was held on Feb. 19 and had great member turnout. Congratulations to all members who received anniversary service pins. Most notably, Brothers William Choboy, Gerald Johnson and William West received their 65-year service pins. Brother Francis D. Szlachta received his retiree watch.

We hope to continue this positive trend of news with a strong contract, for which we are currently in negotiations.

Brandon Lum, P.S.



Local 237 completed purchase of a former grade school in Bergholtz, NY, that will serve as its new training facility and union hall.

Lead With Safety

L.U. 245 (govt,lctt,o,rtb&u), TOLEDO, OH — We hope this writing finds you well and enjoying the spring. Since our last article, our local has ratified a new agreement with Energy Harbor (previously FirstEnergy Solutions), Davis-Besse Nuclear Power Station. As the membership stood in solidarity through the 17-month-long negotiations, this solidarity provided a backbone for the negotiating committee to stay the course and negotiate an agreement the membership would support.

Local 245 has great partnerships and ongoing marketing campaigns with the University of Toledo "Go Rockets," the Toledo Walleye, the Toledo Mud Hens and our sisters and brothers at Local 71, with whom we share a billboard (see photo). These marketing campaigns are recruiting efforts for our Outside Construction branch and the ALBAT Apprenticeship Program.

You don't have to be in a leadership role to lead with safety.

Stay safe.

Brian Gendaszek, P.S.



Local 245 partners and runs ongoing marketing campaigns with the University of Toledo "Go Rockets," the Toledo Walleye, the Toledo Mud Hens and the sisters and brothers of Local 71.



Local 269 members and their families gather to march in the Hamilton St. Patrick's Day parade.

Parades Get Green Light

L.U. 269 (i&o), TRENTON, NJ — With the COVID-19 rules finally relaxing and allowing us to resume some of our traditional activities mask-free, Mother Nature decided to remind us who's boss by providing unsuitable weather for many St. Patrick's Day parades throughout the Northeast. Some parades were postponed while others were outright canceled. After a week's delay, the Hamilton Saint Patrick's Day parade took place on what turned out to be a beautiful Saturday afternoon on March 19.

Members and their families were out in full force either marching with the local or cheering from the crowd. The local's new electronic messaging truck was the centerpiece of the column and let everyone in attendance know who we are and what we stand for. Thanks to all those who volunteered their time and effort to convert the sign from a tow-behind trailer into its own fully autonomous vehicle. And thanks to all the others who helped organize, march and support Local 269 on one of its most high-profile days of the year. The effort truly represents the union's philosophy of coming together and making it happen for the good of us all.

Brian Jacoppo, P.S.

Expecting a Record Year for Commercial Construction

L.U. 309 (l,lctt,mo,mt,o,rts,spa&u), COLLINSVILLE, IL — Despite occasional supply issues, construction work in our local is positive. The Southern Illinois Builders Association expects that 2022 should be a record year for new commercial projects. Currently, we are fortunate to have multiple large-scale commercial projects in progress. The Boeing facility at MidAmerica St. Louis Airport will produce the MQ-25 Stingray, the Navy's first operational carrier-based unmanned aircraft. At Scott Air Force Base, the Air Mobility Command building is beginning a multi-year renovation while new construction continues with the Joint Operations and Mission Planning Center. In Glen Carbon, work is ongoing for Ameren's new Transmission Operations Control Center. Combined, these four

projects account for \$60 million worth of work for IBEW members.

Steel production at U.S. Steel in Granite City is surging, and maintenance projects within the mill are underway. Thank you to all the travelers who helped man the blast furnace reline.

Special note: Commemorative stickers are available at the hall in honor of our dearest Brother Chris Weir.

Carlos S. Perez, R.S.



Local 309 created a commemorative sticker to honor Brother Chris Weir.

We Build, We Fight

L.U. 343 (l,spa&st), LE SUEUR, MN — The Helmets To Hardhats (H2H) program offers career training and employment opportunities to veterans who are transitioning back to civilian life. H2H introduces veterans to the construction industry. The National Association of Building Trades Unions (NABTU), of which the IBEW is a member, sponsors the program. Last month, NABTU held its convention in Washington, D.C. The IBEW was well represented nationally, but a spotlight did shine on one honoree in particular.

Local 343 fourth-year apprentice Alicia Green received a surprising email in February from an H2H representative. She was invited to attend the national H2H conference in Washington, D.C. in April. Alicia's transition from Navy veteran to union apprentice was highlighted in a video that will be used to market the H2H program and for possible use at the Tradeswomen Build Nations conference in October. She also received a generous tool package from Stanley Black & Decker.

Alicia served in the Navy Construction Battalion from 2011 to 2016. As a Seabee, she learned various construction skills that crossover to our trade. Congratulations, Alicia, and thank you for representing Local 343 on a national stage. The Seabee motto is "We build, we fight." The IBEW builds and continues to fight for labor rights. NOTHING is guaranteed.

Buy Union/Made In USA.

Tom Small, P.S.

Local 347 Dedicates Union Hall to Brother Harry Broach

L.U. 347 (em,i,mt,rtb,rts&spa), DES MOINES, IA — Our local has adopted by resolution a dedication of the General Membership Meeting and Assembly Hall located at 6809 Bellagio Court, Ankeny, Iowa, to Brother Howell Hamilton "Harry" Broach. We do this to honor Brother Broach for his lifetime of service to the Brotherhood and labor.

Brother Broach transferred his ticket to Local 347 in 1915 and helped organize the one-year-old local. Two years later, he was appointed an international representative of the IBEW, and, in 1920, he became an international vice president. At the end of 1929, following the death of International President James P. Noonan, Brother Broach was appointed international president by the IBEW Executive Council. He continued to serve the members of the IBEW in other capacities from 1933 until 1960, when he retired. He died later that year. Local 347 wishes to honor the legacy of Brother Broach with this dedication of our new hall.

Local 347 had an open house at the new hall the evening of Feb. 24. In attendance were hundreds of members, labor leaders, employers, industry partners and legislators. The move to the new hall was accomplished at the first of the year. Now that everything has been moved, sorted out and put in its proper place, the staff has settled into their routines again.

Work calls are slowing down, but the work picture still appears strong for 2022.

On Saturday, March 12, the local held a combined pin party/recognition night for the years 2021-2022. Planning for a picnic in June is underway.

Mike Schweiger, P.S.

Local 357 Helps Habitat for Humanity

L.U. 357 (c,i,mt&se), LAS VEGAS, NV — Habitat for Humanity helps families build and improve places to call home. And that's what the IBEW is all about: helping each other out!

In a joint effort, IBEW 357 members contributed their electrical skills and expertise to wire the first two homes built for the Habitat for Humanity Pittman project. We hope to be able to volunteer to complete the rest of the 14 single family, two- and three-bedroom homes that are planned in the area.

It's empowering to come together to help our community while getting to teach, learn and improve our skills. It is great to see everyone work together and have fun while doing hard work for something meaningful. This has been a joint effort between our contractors and our members. Mojave Electric, G&G Systems and Pope Technologies have provided material, permits, storage and a one-year warranty.

Special thanks to the Volunteer Action Committee: Tony Eddington, Luis Gill, Kodi Green, Carole Kilburn, Don Oliver, Jessica Raats, Jerry Warren and Richie Work. Wendi Newman and Lelina Guevara brought this project to the building trades, unifying a team of organized labor.

Project Manager Chuck Meyers has been the leading force on getting together Local 357 and Habitat for Humanity. Leading JWs include General Manager Chris Kilburn, Foreman Josh Woods and Foreman Alton Williams. Thanks to all the volunteers on



Local 347 honors the legacy of Brother Howell Hamilton "Harry" Broach with the dedication of its new hall.



Local 357 members volunteer for the Habitat for Humanity Pittman Project in Henderson, NV. Photo courtesy of Carole Kilburn.

this project. Our members have provided their skills and time to ensure a quality job is done.

Julie-Ann Peeples, P.S.

Energy Secretary, Governor Discuss Clean Energy with Local 369

L.U. 369 (em,es,i,lctt,o,ptc,rtb,rts,spa&u), LOUISVILLE, KY — On March 3, Energy Secretary Jennifer M. Granholm, Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear, IBEW Local 369 Assistant Business Manager Ed Devine and others met to discuss the impacts of clean energy investments across Kentucky and Appalachia.

The meeting took place at Schneider Electric in Lexington, Ky. Devine participated in a roundtable discussion with Secretary Granholm and Gov. Beshear along with other individuals with interest in clean energy and the environment. The group discussed President Biden's vision for the country as it relates to clean energy and all the opportunities it creates for working men and women in Kentucky.

Gene Holthouser, Bus. Rep.



Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm and Local 369 Assistant Business Manager Ed Devine.

Brother Jeff Cooling Runs for Iowa State Representative

L.U. 405 (em,i,rtb&spa), CEDAR RAPIDS, IA — We are excited to pass along the news that President Jeff Cooling has announced his campaign for Iowa House District 77. The Iowa Statehouse is in dire need of representatives who will fight for labor, and Brother Cooling will continue his exemplary record of working hard for labor as a state representative.

Along with being local union president, Jeff has served as Apprenticeship Committee chairman, as well as Health, Welfare and Pension trustee. Currently, he is the Eleventh District representative on the IBEW RENEW Advisory Council and a member of the IBEW STRONG Committee. He also serves as an area vice president for the Hawkeye Area Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

He has also served as a local union registrar, AFL-CIO National Young Worker trainer, Labor Council Executive Board member, NUHAWK (Next-up

Hawkeye Area Workers Konnect) chairperson and Iowa Federation of Labor AFL-CIO auditor.

We look forward to having Brother Cooling's strong labor-focused leadership in the Iowa Statehouse.

Jon Fasselius, Exec. Board

Local 449 Runs Successful Organizing Campaign

L.U. 449 (i,o,u,rtb,rts,spa), POCATELLO, ID — Our local recently ran a successful organizing campaign with the employees of Trees, LLC. Having learned some lessons from previous organizing campaigns, we decided to run an undercover campaign comprised of a VOC (Volunteer Organizing Committee).

We took our time when we met with the employees to select our VOC. The VOC then began meeting with the other employees and discussing the benefits of going union. We reviewed agreements that Trees, LLC had already agreed to for surrounding IBEW locals. When we showed the employees these existing agreements, they realized how much they were leaving on the table, and we believe this was a huge motivating factor for the employees to vote to become a union. We explained to the employees that these agreements had been negotiated over years between the employees and the company. Once the VOC had 90% of the cards signed for representation of the unit, we were able to move forward and filed for the election with the NLRB.

I would like to take the time to thank our VOC and our western counties organizer Dan Green, SOC William Kniffin, Business Manager Ned Jones and Assistant Business Agent Clay Hirning. This campaign was a long, hard battle that was started ten years ago by our predecessors. Through dedication and perseverance, we were able to unite the employees of Trees, LLC.

I am happy to report at the time of this writing, we have had our first negotiation session with Trees, LLC. Negotiations are going well.

The following brothers have retired: Russell (Gino) Endo and Brett White. With heartfelt condolences, the following brothers passed away: Elmer Detwiler and James Trevey.

Craig McDonald, Org.

Membership Gains Strengthen Our Local

L.U. 481 (ees,em,i,mt,rts,s&spa), INDIANAPOLIS, IN — In March, 60 new members were sworn into the local. At the same meeting, we honored those members who have hit special milestones in their membership. What a great thing to see: bringing in new members while honoring those who have many years as members of Local 481. For new members, it is something to aspire and strive for one day.

From the newest member to the 50-year mem-

ber, it is truly a testament to the men and women of the IBEW who still believe in what we do and what we stand for. Such a wide range of ages and membership all in the same room, with the same goal to promote the IBEW, is a powerful thing to see. Thank you to all the members who received their service pins, and congratulations to the newest members.

The IBEW is only as strong as you make it. Participate and take pride in your local, just as all of those before you have.

Blake A. Andrews, Bus. Rep./Treas.

Local 625 Welcomes New Organized Contractor

L.U. 625 (c,ees,em,i,it,mar&mt), HALIFAX, NS, CANADA — We have recently lost the following members: Kenneth L. Boutillier in Nov. 2021, Ron McKinley and Ronald Peitzsche in Dec. 2021 and Bill Brenton and Donald Hickox (of former IBEW Local 1432) in Jan. 2022.

The following members have recently retired: Dave Julien (Oct. 2021) and Dennis Sullivan and Gord Hipson (Nov. 2021).

Local 625 would like to congratulate the members who received their certificates of qualification. They are Matthew Arthur, Dennis Cacayan, Ryan Corporon and Alex Swinimar.

On Dec. 4, 80 families and a total of 165 children had a virtual visit with Santa Claus. Santa sent out gifts for the children, who picked up their favorite new toys.

On Dec. 11, Local 625 got its favorite event back: the year-end holiday party. There were 230 members and guests in attendance. A great time was had by all!

Finally, Local 625 would like to welcome newly organized contractor Supernova Energy Solutions.

Bradley Wood, P.S.

Strength in Unity

L.U. 649 (i,lctt,mt&o), ALTON, IL — Over the last few months, Business Agent Alan Rubinstein has been instrumental of informing our local's members of frustrating proceedings stemming from the United Brotherhood of Carpenter and Joiners of America.

Duane Moore, the national director of **RespectOurCrafts.com**, a website initiative that is part of the AFL-CIO, has informed and provided assistance to Building and Construction Trades under attack by the leadership of the UBC, including IBEW local unions.

Over 10 years the UBC expanded their scope of work by deluding wages and work standards negotiated contractually and fairly by building trades craft unions. Additionally, they signed wall-to-wall agreements throughout the country contrary to and spoke out against project labor agreements. These project labor agreements help UBC members and all the building trades

This is a harsh precedent that may affect other non-building trades bargaining units among organized unions in other industries.

Through the Respect Our Crafts website, there will be updates to keep the rank-and-file members of the Building Trades Unions informed, along with customers and users.

I end this post as Mr. Moore ended his special communications to organized labor in this great nation and Canada: Let there be "strength in unity."

Terry Wilhite, P.S.

Book 2 Opportunities

L.U. 683 (i&ptc), COLUMBUS, OH — Work continues to be plentiful in our jurisdiction. At the time of this writing, calls are trickling in and making it through Book 2. Our traveling brothers and sisters continue to help fill calls, and we are forecasting that hundreds more will be needed this year. Calls have started to come in for the two new data-center sites in the area. Those sites are in addition to the work on three other large data centers that are still taking on manpower.

The first utility-scale solar project for our local should be ready to ramp up in the summer. There have been calls for the Franklin County Corrections Center, which is in its second phase. The \$1.8 billion OSU Medical Center has steel going up and should begin ramping up as well.

I would like to thank our traveling brothers and sisters for their continued support and would welcome all to consider Local 683 while on the road. These are unprecedented times for our area and the opportunities for long-term employment should be available for the foreseeable future.

Mike Morey, Pres.



Local 915 Business Manager Randall King (far right) is sworn in with other officers of the Florida Electrical Workers Association.

New Contracts and Members for Local 915

L.U. 915 (i&mt), TAMPA, FL — With our CBA ratified and behind us, Business Manager Randall King and our negotiating committee were able to ratify the Busch Gardens and Derby Lane contracts, completing the bargaining for this year. Local 915 had a couple record years for man hours since 2020, but this year seems to be following our usual trends. Material shortages have been to blame for some of the slow progress we have encountered. We have already started to pick up with more work coming in the late spring and summer. Although the work picture isn't as robust as it was a year ago, we were still able to swear in 32 new members at our January general membership meeting.

With the pandemic subsiding, we have finally been able to have in-person gatherings again. We had our first outdoor Jolly Jamboree in December, and everyone had a great time. Business Manager King completed his 5-year term on CIR and was recently reelected and sworn in for another term for the Florida Electrical Workers Association. The FEWA is an organization that encompasses all IBEW locals in the state of Florida. We look forward to seeing everyone at the 40th International Convention.

Shawn McDonnell, Pres.

Brother Cliff Zylks Retires

L.U. 995 (i,lctt,o,rts&spa), BATON ROUGE, LA — It is with personal regret but the warmest of wishes that I announce the retirement of Clifford Zylks. Cliff's retirement marks the end of an era for Local 995. He has served the local in many capacities and has worked for four business managers; but most notably, he held the title of organizer for over 27 years. Being elected to his first term on the local's Execu-

LOCAL LINES

tive Board in 1995, he served 8 ½ consecutive terms. Cliff is the second of three generations of Zylks as IBEW inside wireman, with his son Kevin being the third. He has been an integral part in the growth and retention of IBEW membership for almost three decades and will be greatly missed. He was deeply involved in many organizing plans and incentives from inception through fruition, including attending the first meeting of the Regional Electrical Committee for Organizing Unorganized People (RECOUP) gathering in 1993.

Jason Dedon, B.M./F.S.



Local 995's Jason Dedon, Cliff Zylks and Kevin Zylks at Cliff's retirement celebration.

Northern California Training Center's Grand Opening

L.U. 1245 (catv,em,govt,lctt,o,pet,u&t), VACAVILLE, CA — Our local is pleased to welcome the workers at Panoche Water District, who finally won their fight for union representation after nearly two years. "What indicated to me that this was a successful organizing campaign in the making was that the majority of their workplace issues were not just related to wages and benefits," remarked IBEW Lead Organizer Rick Thompson. "The core issues of respect, professionalism, safety and fairness were at the heart of every matter that they wanted to address." For the full story, see <https://ibew1245.com/2022/01/19/panoche-water-district-workers-join-ibew-1245>

This winter, the Cal-Nev JATC celebrated the grand opening of its new Northern California Training Center, a project some 15 years in the making. "The



Cal-Nev JATC celebrated the grand opening of its new Northern California Training Center, in Woodland, Calif., a project some 15 years in the making.

opening of this new facility allows our JATC to offer rigorous hands-on training, and supports quality, union jobs in the line construction and line clearance tree trimming industry for California and Nevada," said Senior Assistant Business Manager Ralph Armstrong.

Local 1245 also celebrated the passage of a new COVID-19 paid sick leave bill in California. "Reinstating paid COVID sick leave is the right thing to do for our workers, our families and our communities. It's also a common-sense public health strategy, which is why IBEW Local 1245 joined the California Labor movement to make it a top priority when the Omicron surge emerged," said Local 1245 Business Manager Bob Dean. "We are proud to have played a part in this extraordinary, labor-driven victory, and we thank the Legislature and the Governor for their quick and decisive action on this critical issue."

In Outside Construction, work outlook remains strong throughout Local 1245's jurisdiction, and we expect this trend to continue for many years to come.

Rebecca Band, Comm. Dir.

First All-Union Linemen University Opens in Cincinnati

L.U. 1347 (ees,em,ptc&u), CINCINNATI, OH — In many ways, lineman can be considered the protectors of what is arguably the weakest link in our nation's electrical grid. With exposure to accidents, elements and natural disasters, it's a constant battle to keep everything in good working order and everyone's electricity on as power demands

increase in our technologically dependent world. It can be an often overlooked and underappreciated — but absolutely critical — job. Lineman must be highly trained in order to work safely and effectively and to keep the U.S. moving forward.

With future needs in mind, Local 1347 in Cincinnati, Ohio, has partnered with Jamie Madden and Lineman University to establish a new state-of-the-art facility. This historic union lineman school will have instructors who are all IBEW represented. This opens the door for IBEW members to remain union members while taking part in formalized training. Lineman University will provide the necessary training to keep sufficient numbers of men and women who are exceedingly skilled moving into the workforce at a time when skilled labor and trades have been on a decline. Business Manager Andrew Kirk anticipates multiple facilities will be needed to fulfill these crucial roles.

For more information, visit www.linemenuniversity.com or call 513-767-7700.

Andrew Kirk, B.M.



CEO Jamie Madden, Local 1347 Business Manager Andrew Kirk and lead instructor Ron Perry represent Linemen University in Cincinnati, OH.

Local 1547 Celebrates 75 Years in Alaska

L.U. 1547 (c,em,i,lctt,o,ptc,t&u), ANCHORAGE, AK — Our local was chartered in Alaska on Oct. 1, 1946, and it assumed the jurisdiction of work from Local 46 in Seattle. Old timers arrived in Alaska in the late '20s, '30s and '40s. They came from all across the Lower 48. Some came to escape the Great Depression. Some were in search of adventure; others hoped to make their fortune in this wild and beautiful country; and for some who had gotten into trouble outside, Alaska was the place to come to until things cooled off. They had no idea how important

their actions were in building the communication infrastructure of the 49th state. Some endured the remoteness of villages and the harshest of cold climates. They were people with fire in their hearts, willing to work as hard as needed to support themselves and their future families. In honor of our founding we have created a 75th anniversary logo. Swag featuring our logo can be found at www.ibew1547.org/logo-wear

Melinda Taylor, Comm. Dir.



Local 1547 was chartered in Alaska on Oct. 1, 1946, and it assumed the jurisdiction of work from Local 46 in Seattle, WA.

Future Continues to Be Bright

L.U. 1579 (i&o), AUGUSTA, GA — Our work situation will continue to be strong over the next few years.

Before I report on our future work, I would like to report on the continuing Vogtle project. First, I want to thank the traveling brothers and sisters for helping us man this project. At the time of this writing, there are about 1,800 IBEW members from around the country on this job. I would like to also remind you that when this project starts decreasing in manpower numbers, it will be time to move on to one of the many jobs available in the country or your home local. This is not something that I would usually put in print, but I do realize that many on that project are new to the IBEW. Of course, you will always be welcomed to come back to work on the upcoming projects we will have over the next few years.

Local 1579 is looking forward to the upcoming pit project. This project will be a \$10 billion, eight-year project that will employ several hundred IBEW members and more than 3,000 Building Trades craftspeople. Although the construction is about a year off, there will be demolition work as well as temporary power work available, which will get our members on the job prior to construction.

We are looking forward to another large project that will start in late 2023 called the Tritium Finishing Facility. This project is expected to be completed in 2029 and should employ about 200 IBEW members.

My assistants and I are monitoring another project that will be built in Augusta, a multi-billion-dollar data center. This project has not yet been secured, but we are contacting large union contractors to look at bidding this massive job. I hope to be reporting in the future that we have this work.

As we look forward to these upcoming projects, continue to work hard and do your job to the best of your ability. Maintain a reputation that will make the IBEW proud.

Until next time, God bless!

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

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GROUND^{ED} IN HISTORY



The IBEW's 25th International Convention in 1954 was held in Chicago and welcomed 5,000 delegates, the largest labor convention in the world at the time. Its size prompted a change in delegate allocation to reduce the size of future gatherings.

Convening the Brotherhood

This month the IBEW will convene its 40th International Convention. Nearly 2,000 delegates from local unions across the U.S. and Canada will gather in Chicago to conduct our union's highest form of governance. Resolutions will be submitted, constitutional amendments will be debated, and executive officers will be elected. While the sheer size and scope of the conventions has changed over the years, the basic format remains the same as laid at our founding 131 years ago.

On Nov. 21, 1891, 10 delegates met in St. Louis to convene our founding convention. For the next seven days they worked to establish the guidelines that would govern our union. They created operating rules for local unions and their officers, responsibilities for executive officers, rights and benefits for members, initiation rituals, policies for conducting and resolving strikes, procedures for holding conventions and a dues structure to finance the organization. On Nov. 28, 1891, the delegates codified these rules into a constitution and the IBEW was born. The last order of business was to choose the time and place for the next convention. The vote was for Chicago in one year's time. At the conclusion of the event, the minutes were collected and published in a "proceedings report." This 12-page document, currently held in the IBEW Museum at the International Office, recorded all business that was brought to the floor. It has served as a template for every convention proceeding that came after, the most recent of which totaled just under 500 pages in 2016.

The Second and Third Conventions were held annually in 1892 and 1893, at which point they were moved to every two years. Some notable events that occurred at these include: admission of women members (1892); creation of the Electrical Worker newspaper (1892); three-year on-the-job apprenticeship (1893); Mary Hoznik becoming the first woman organizer (1895); and the NBEW becoming IBEW

with the admission of Canadian members (1899). The conventions continued to be biennial until 1905 when it was decided to move to a four-year rotation.

It proved to be a costly decision. In 1908, with just a year to go until the next convention, First District Vice President James Reid and an organizer, James Murphy, convened a "Special Convention" during which the leadership of the IBEW was voted out and Reid and Murphy were elected president and secretary. The actual president of the IBEW, Frank McNulty, refused to recognize their legitimacy and thus began the Reid-Murphy Split. The legitimate IBEW held its next convention in 1909, but decided to switch back to a biennial system in order to better address the crisis. That's how in 1911 there were two IBEW conventions held in Rochester, N.Y., at the same: one led by McNulty and the other by Reid. Thankfully, a court decision in 1912 by the Ohio Supreme Court effectively brought an end to the secession movement, and at the 1913 Convention the IBEW was once again under one roof with nearly all locals readmitted.

The conventions continued with their biennial rotation until 1929. Some notable events included: creation of the Council of Industrial Relations (1919); selection of Washington, D.C. as the location of a permanent International Office (1919); establishment of the IBEW Pension Plan (1921); first convention held in Canada (Montreal, 1923); establishment of the Electrical Workers Benefits Association (1923); and creation of the Pension Benefit Fund (1927). A month after 1929's 20th Convention, the stock market crashed, kicking off the Great Depression, and IBEW delegates wouldn't come together again for more than a decade. During that time, administrative action was done by referendum every two years.

In 1941, the year of the IBEW's 50th anniversary, the 21st Convention was finally convened in St. Louis, beginning a tradition of holding conventions in the brother-

hood's founding city every 25 years to celebrate milestone anniversaries. One month after the 1941 Convention, the U.S. entered World War II and administrative action was once again done by referendum during the war years. The 22nd Convention was held in 1946 and continued with the biennial rotation until 1950, at which point the delegates voted to hold the gatherings every four years.

The first on the new schedule was the 25th Convention in Chicago. More than 5,000 delegates attended, making it the world's largest labor union convention ever held at the time. It was so large, in fact, that the IBEW had to restructure how delegates were allotted to local unions. Before 1954, each local was allowed 1 delegate per 100 members. After 1954, it was 1 delegate for the first 250 members, and an additional delegate for every increase of 250, followed by every 500, and then every 3,000 with a maximum of 15 delegates. This is the ratio still used today and has maintained an average of 3,000 delegates at subsequent conventions.

The 27th Convention in 1962 was held in Montreal, beginning another tradition of holding conventions in Canada every 25 years, with Toronto hosting in 1986 and Vancouver in 2011. The gatherings continued their 4-year rotation from 1954 to 1986. At the 1986 Convention delegates voted to hold the events on a 5-year rotation in order for the next to fall in 1991 for the IBEW's 100th anniversary. This rotation was followed until 2021 when restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic forced postponement of the 40th Convention to this month.

St. Louis still holds the title for hosting the most conventions with seven, while Chicago is preparing to host its fifth. ■

For more on how to support the IBEW's preservation of its history, visit nbew-ibewmuseum.org. Have an idea for this feature? Send it to Curtis_Bateman@ibew.org.



International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

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

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

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WHO WE ARE

Chicago's 'Hip-Hop Historian' is a TikTok Star Made by Labor

Shermann "Dilla" Thomas zigs when everyone else is zagging.

While most college graduates chain themselves to desk jobs, he earned his degree and then grabbed at the chance for a bottom-rung union job at ComEd with a Downers Grove, Ill., Local 15 member card in his wallet. Eleven years later, he is a substation operator, trained on the job and making four times the median American income.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020 and young people across the world started making dance and lip-sync videos for the social media app TikTok — including his daughter Bayleigh — Thomas didn't join the adults shaking their heads at this next social media foolishness; he zagged again and started his own account.

"The first few [videos,] my daughter Bayleigh had me dancing like everybody else, but then I told her, 'You need to stop dancing like the rest of these people and do something different,'" Thomas said.

His suggestion: 15- to 30-second videos about Chicago.

"Everything dope in America either came from or was improved on by Chicago. It's the greatest city on Earth," he said, pausing for emphasis between each word. "Who could resist an adorable 8-year-old girl doing that?"

Well Bayleigh, for one. She resisted that entirely.

"She said, 'Don't nobody want to see no Chicago history. Get out my face,'" he said. "And to maintain dominance in my house, I did one anyway to prove her wrong. And here we are."

Where he was, when he told that story, was a couch on The Kelly Clarkson show, a nationally broadcast daytime talk show. His channel — @6figga_dilla — had gone viral. He was a hit.

Thomas produced dozens of videos on everything from the name of every street in the city to the Empire Carpet jingle to the history of local delicacy, mild sauce.

They've been watched millions of times, shared hundreds of thousands of times and he has nearly 90,000 followers.

He receives so many requests from local, regional, and national television programs he had to hire a publicist. On weekends, she books four Chicago history bus tours and he even cut a deal with Netflix to develop a show about the Windy City. Nearly every weekday, before his shift at ComEd, he does a history talk at a local high school or college, he said.

"If I have a heavy day, I trade with a night guy and work the overnight," he said. All this success, he says, all of it goes back to that union card in his wallet.

It's right there in his TikTok bio: "Husband. Father. Chicago Historian. IBEW."

"The tenth day as a meter reader I realized I was going to see the entirety of Chicago in a way that I never would have been able to otherwise," he said.

The truth is, everybody in every city has places they don't go. Sometimes it's shaped by the nature of 21st-century work — home to work, back to home; repeat for 40 years — but sometimes it's about not feeling welcome. In a big, diverse city like Chicago, that can often come down to race and ethnicity.

"When I was a kid, my parents told me, for



Downers Grove, Ill., Local 15 member Sherman "Dilla" Thomas' Chicago history TikTok has built an enormous audience online and in traditional media.

there. That isn't true for most people," he said. "Removing those worries leaves me time to think, to chase my interests. The IBEW makes that possible."

"We are lucky to have him as a member. On top of all else he does, he does a lot of work for the local: he is a steward and he is chairman of the Chicago unit meeting, one of eight units in the local," said Downers Grove, Ill., Local 15 President and Business Manager Terry McGoldrick. "He is unbelievably talented. I don't know how he gets it all into 24 hours each day."

Thomas is clear who makes it possible: Lynette, his wife. They have seven children together: Isaiah, Shemaiah, Jacob, Landon, Bayleigh, Wisdom and Junior. While he is starting his many-headed business, he leans a lot on Lynette. "She is holding the house down," he said.

Thomas regularly brings labor history in his videos, stories of the struggles working-class Chicagoans fought to get, bluntly, what he has.

And in his presentations in high schools, he makes a point not only of pushing the trades but, making it very real for the kids who may not be listening too closely.

"I always mention how much I make," he said. "No one pays attention until you say how much you get paid."

Thomas said his professional goal is to be an organizer, and everything he is doing, in his mind, is what modern organizing looks like.

"In the past an organizer would go down to the bar, buy a guy a beer and say, 'If you were union, you could buy it for yourself.' Now, no one is at the bar or [the people we want to organize] are at 1 million different bars," he said. "But all of them are watching their phones."

Thomas has one particular employer he wants a shot at, an ambitious target, a gargantuan and famously antiunion company in the city.

"We won't be able to stand 100 feet from their front door waving signs to win. It will be the videos and the tweets and the hashtags that can be shared that will bring them home," he said. "Organizers are historians, too. If I can teach the complexity of redlining and how neighborhood boundaries were made in 60 seconds, with five minutes I could explain why a rising tide raises all ships."

Whether or not he gets that chance, hundreds of attendees at the IBEW's Chicago convention this month will get a taste of Thomas' storytelling in person. Local 15 is sponsoring Thomas to do multiple labor-history tours that will go by the major landmarks of Chicago organized labor from Haymarket to the stretch of influential union halls on Washington Street.

Everyone will leave with an eye for the city he loves, he said. He brings your attention to things that hide in the open.

Like on Washington Street.

"It's like the only part of the city where there's no parking meters there. The unions there have never let them be installed," he said. "Chicago is a union town, after all." ■



"This is what modern organizing looks like. It will be the videos and the tweets and the hashtags that can be shared that will bring them home."

— Local 15 member Sherman "Dilla" Thomas

example, don't go to Bridgeport, a South Side white Irish Protestant enclave (and birthplace of five mayors — history)," he said. "But if a job says go, you go and then you go and find out that they are just people.

"And that little old Irish grandma, it's not like she sees a lot of Black people either, and all of sudden she has a 6-foot-5 young Black man with dreads in her basement. And then, we're just people, in our personal space."

He saw a different side of the city: the inside. Hundreds of homes a week, thousands of people a year. He watched and listened and talked with thousands of new people and learned countless stories. His city opened like a flower in spring and what he found was people were more alike than they were different.

"I have heard 'Take out the garbage' in Ebonics, every broken English accent and language there is. We're all just people," he said. "And that is true of the past, too. They were not so different from us. They are just another kind of person you haven't met."

But it isn't just the way the union job helped him see the world. It's the confidence he felt in a job that kept him close to home, ended when he clocked out, offered training to grow and wages and benefits that freed him from the worries so many Americans have as a matter of course.

"You can't be creative if you aren't happy at work, and you can't be happy if you have no security. If my kid chips his tooth, we have dental insurance, and it's good insurance. I am not worried we can't afford inhalers. And when I leave work, I leave work

Photo Credits: Chicago Fire