



“The IBEW is a leading voice for working families because the IBEW’s focus has consistently been on improving members’ lives and powering an economy that works for everyone. And these priorities are amplified by 820,000 members — working in various sectors — utility, construction, telecommunications, broadcasting, manufacturing, railroad, and government.”

— International President
Kenneth W. Cooper



IBEW POLICY BRIEF

Chapter 1: Protecting Labor Standards and the Rights of Working People

As one of the largest labor unions, the IBEW is a leading voice for working families, focusing on improving the lives of members and powering an economy that works for everyone. The IBEW advocates for high-road labor standards policies, particularly:

- Prevailing wage requirements
- Project labor agreements (PLAs)
- Apprenticeship utilization requirements
- Local hire provisions
- Labor peace agreements
- End worker misclassification

The IBEW applauds the numerous steps taken by the Biden-Harris administration to improve and protect unions and the rights of working people. The IBEW will continue working with the administration and Congress to advocate for policies that safeguard organizing and collective bargaining rights. We will also continue to ensure federal investments in infrastructure include requirements to utilize registered apprenticeships and other high-road labor standards.

Pending Priorities

The Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act

Public support for unions has increased recently, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic. A 2022 Gallup poll showed approval for labor unions at its highest since 1975, with 71 percent of those polled stating their approval.¹ Despite this robust and burgeoning support, the share of workers represented by unions is only around 10 percent.²

¹ Though statistically similar to the 65% approval rating found in 2020, the 2021 reading is the highest Gallup has measured since 71% in 1965. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/354455/approval-labor-unions-highest-point-1965.aspx>.

² Economic Policy Institute Fact Sheet: Why workers need the Protecting the Right to Organize Act (2021), <https://www.epi.org/publication/why-workers-need-the-pro-act-fact-sheet/>.

In recent decades, anti-union interests have eroded federal labor laws. This deterioration has made it increasingly difficult for workers to win union representation and have their voices heard.

In 2021, lawmakers introduced the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, legislation that would bolster workers' rights to organize and make classification rules more stringent for independent contractors. In addition, the PRO Act would impose harsher punishments for employers who violate workers' rights. For example, the bill would allow workers to override right-to-work laws, protect the right to strike, and prevent employer interference in elections. The bill also includes civil penalties of up to \$50,000 per violation of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), double civil penalties of up to \$100,000 for repeat NLRA violations, and civil penalties against directors and officers.

President Biden has been a vocal supporter of unions and the right to organize. His administration issued a policy statement supporting the bill the day before it passed in the House.³ The PRO Act passed in the U.S. House of Representatives on March 9, 2021, but failed in the Senate.

The IBEW continues to advocate for the passage of the PRO Act and any opportunities to include similar provisions in new legislation.

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³ Office of Management and Budget, Statement of Administration Policy: H.R. 842 – Protecting the Right to Organize Act of 2021 (March 8, 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/SAP-HR842.pdf>.