



# IBEW POLICY BRIEF

Legislative Priorities for the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress (2021-2022)

As a labor union, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) is a leading grassroots voice for working families. The IBEW represents approximately 775,000 active and retired members throughout North America who work in a wide variety of industries including utility, construction, telecommunications, broadcasting, manufacturing, railroad, and government. We are focused on improving our members' lives and powering an economy that works for everyone.

## IBEW's Stance on Climate Change

- As the largest energy union in the world, the IBEW understands the climate crisis is urgent and poses a threat to our nation's long-term prosperity. The IBEW supports efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change and responsibly reduce emissions domestically.
- The IBEW supports preserving key baseload energy sources, including natural gas, coal with carbon capture technology, and nuclear power. These baseload power sources are important to maintaining the security and reliability of our nation's electric grid.
- The IBEW supports legislation that would create family-supporting, union jobs to rebuild our nation's infrastructure, rejuvenate our manufacturing sector, lower greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Any transition to a lower emissions economy will require the inclusion of strong labor standards to ensure that taxpayers' money will create high-road jobs with living wages.

## Multiemployer Pension Reform and Protecting Workers' Pensions

- The GROW Act poses an existential threat to members' pensions and the long-term solvency of the multiemployer pension system. The GROW Act is opposed by the vast majority of labor unions in the multiemployer pension system.
- The IBEW is heartened that the Butch Lewis Emergency Pension Plan Relief Act passed as part of the American Rescue Plan and was signed into law by President Biden on March 12, 2021. This legislation will provide the necessary assistance to struggling plans that will support retirees and communities, prevent the pending insolvency of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC), and provide temporary relief for single and multiemployer plans in good standing, such as IBEW-sponsored plans. However, during debate, it was opposed by every Republican senator. Pension threats remain a possibility, including that posed by the GROW Act.

**The IBEW is urging all Members of Congress to oppose including GROW in any legislative vehicle. The IBEW is very concerned that GROW will be included in a "must pass" bill in 2021.**

## Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Training Program

- EVITP is a one-of-a-kind, nonprofit, brand-neutral national industry collaborative that has provided the appropriate curriculum to the electrical industry training centers and community colleges to certify licensed journeyman electricians or their equivalents (where applicable) on the proper procedures to electrically install electric vehicle supply equipment (EVSE) to local and national electrical standards, ensuring that installation is completed safely.
- The IBEW stance is that legislation providing federal dollars for the installation of EVSE should be done by highly trained, Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Training Program (EVITP) credentialed electricians. EVSE includes charging stations, charging docks, recharging points or charging points, in residential, commercial, governmental or industrial settings.
- [EVITP One Pager](#)

## The American Jobs Plan and Infrastructure with Strong Labor Standards

- The IBEW supports President Biden's [American Jobs Plan](#), which provides a historic eight-year, \$2 trillion investment to rebuild a diminished infrastructure by:
  - Providing the necessary resources to battle climate change and take on global competitors
  - Putting the United States on the path to a revitalized domestic infrastructure while creating tens of thousands of jobs in the IBEW's core sectors

- Specifically, the IBEW would like federal investment in electrical transmission and distribution, broadband buildout, public transit, freight and passenger rail. Additionally, the IBEW supports federal investment in the electrification of the transportation sector, to include electric vehicle charging infrastructure, railroad and port electrification.
- The IBEW supports legislation that addresses the safety risks of the new railroad operating model termed Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR), such as the GAO study on the impacts of PSR that was contained in the Moving Forward Act. The GAO study would provide important and much needed data on how PSR and long trains pose threats to worker and community safety.
- The IBEW supports responsible federal investment in the cleanup of environmentally impacted land around the United States, also known as brownfield sites. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that there are 450,000 brownfield sites across America. Federal investment in the remediation and redevelopment of brownfields is imperative to providing equity and protecting the communities that have been impacted by environmental contamination.
- The IBEW urges the inclusion of strong labor standards, such as prevailing wages, requiring the use of project labor agreements (PLAs), an ABC test for independent contractors and requiring contractors to be neutral for purposes of organizing a union, to be attached to federal projects in an infrastructure stimulus bill.

## Passage and Enactment of the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act

- The IBEW supports the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, which would modernize the National Labor Relations Act by providing more protection for workers including the right to organize and negotiate for higher wages and better benefits.
- Union membership dropped from 20.1% in 1983 to 10.5% in 2018 and overall income inequality has significantly increased. The IBEW believes that this decline in union membership is one of the principal causes of income inequality in the United States. The PRO Act (H.R. 842/S. 420) would help counteract this inequality by strengthening labor rights.
- In the last Congress, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the PRO Act but an anti-worker majority blocked it in the Senate last year. Passing the PRO Act in both chambers of Congress and getting President Biden's signature is vital to the country's economic recovery.
- On March 3, 2021, H.R. 842 passed the House of Representatives with five Republicans joining in a bi-partisan vote.
- Specifically, the Act would:
  - Prevent employers from interfering in representation elections by providing for civil penalties for interference
  - Provide for first-contract mediation and arbitration, if necessary for the parties to reach a first agreement

- Repeal the prohibition on secondary boycotts
- Prohibit employers from permanently replacing strikers
- Update the definitions of independent contractor and supervisor to provide protection to more workers and eliminate worker misclassification

## • [PRO Act Snapshot](#)

The IBEW is urging Senators to co-sponsor and support the Protecting the Right to Organize Act (S. 420) when it is introduced and voted on in the Senate.

## Labor Standards Tied to 'Clean Energy' Tax Credits

- Unionized workers have been left out of the industries that benefit from several federal clean energy tax credits, such as solar, wind, and electric vehicles, as well as tax credits like 45(Q) for carbon capture and sequestration. Carbon capture utilization and storage has great potential to achieve carbon reductions at existing utility and industrial plants while creating tens of thousands of new jobs.
- The IBEW is very concerned that Congress did not attach any labor standards to the renewable energy tax that were reauthorized under the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act.
- The IBEW insists that labor standards, like requiring prevailing wages, neutrality for purposes of collective bargaining and an ABC test for independent contractors, are required to receive tax credits in these sectors.
- [One Pager on Clean Energy Tax Credits](#)
- [One Pager on Why Labor Standards are Important](#)

## Protecting Workers Dislocated from GHG Emission Reduction Requirements

- Congress needs to tie legislative efforts to require greenhouse gas emission reductions with wage support for dislocated workers and assistance for negatively impacted communities that will maintain basic services and create new job opportunities.

## Support Zero Emission Electrical Generation Jobs

- The IBEW supports a diverse portfolio of zero emission The IBEW supports a diverse portfolio of zero emission energy sources, including the expansion of nuclear, solar, wind and offshore wind generation.
- Nuclear Generation
  - Nuclear power is the only source of electrical generation that can reliably produce mass amounts of clean energy 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

- Currently, nuclear power provides 20 percent of the nation’s electricity and is the largest source of non-emitting electrical generation in the United States – providing more than 50 percent of all zero-carbon generation in the country.
- Historically low power prices are making nuclear reactors in competitive power markets vulnerable to premature closure due to unfavorable economics, even though the average operating costs for nuclear units have dropped 30 percent since 2012.
- Nuclear power, due to its around-the-clock operations, is well suited to compliment intermittent renewable energy generation, like solar and wind.
- Wind Generation
  - The IBEW is involved in all aspects of the wind industry-from the supply chain to manufacturing to installation to maintenance.
  - Our members are well-trained to provide the skill and experience necessary to rapidly deploy wind power, both onshore and offshore, around the country.
  - It’s critical that Congress ensure that union workers are not excluded from this growing industry and support domestic supply chains for the wind industry.
- Solar Generation
  - The IBEW supports solar generation and our members are trained in the installation, maintenance and repair of solar generation through labor-management registered apprenticeship programs.
  - The solar industry has one of the lowest rates of unionization - just four percent - within the energy sector.
  - The IBEW urges Congress to ensure that solar industry jobs are open to union workers, pay middle class wages and benefits, and help build the components for solar generation in the United States.
- Hydrogen Power
  - The IBEW is very interested in the development of hydrogen as a clean fuel that can play a key role in decarbonizing the trucking and industrial sectors and beyond.
  - Congress should invest significant resources into the research, development and demonstration of hydrogen and make sure this fuel of the future is made in the United States by union workers.
- Carbon Capture Utilization and Storage (CCUS)
  - The IBEW supports robust federal investment in the research, development and commercialization of carbon capture utilization and storage.
  - CCUS has been identified by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the International Energy Agency (IEA) that carbon capture, utilization and storage is an integral part of the technology solution set in order to cost-effectively achieve global climate targets.
  - CCUS will be critical to decarbonize fossil fuel-fired power plants that provide reliable electricity and substantially improve grid reliability.
  - CCUS will also help protect the hundreds of thousands of union jobs currently found in the fossil fuel sector and allow the United States to export this technology to other countries.

## Preservation of the U.S. Nuclear Fleet

- To date, 11 reactors in 10 states totaling nearly 8,500 megawatts have been forced to retire prematurely, resulting in the loss of thousands of IBEW jobs. Eight additional reactors totaling 9,370 megawatts have announced plans to retire prematurely in the near future, which will lead to additional job losses and the loss of clean energy sources from the electrical grid.
- The IBEW urges policymakers in federal agencies and in Congress to act before more reactors are forced to prematurely retire and further distancing the United States from its emission reduction goals.
- One possible solution is to provide existing nuclear generation with an investment tax credit (ITC), modeled after tax credits for other forms of clean energy. This policy was introduced in the 116th Congress as the Nuclear Powers America Act (H.R. 2314/S. 1134).
- A second possible solution is the creation of a zero emission nuclear power production tax credit (PTC).
- [Map of U.S Nuclear Plants](#)

## Advanced Nuclear Development

- The development and deployment of advanced nuclear reactors and domestic supply of fuel is important for the United States to maintain its role as the global leader in nuclear technology and prevent nuclear proliferation. The IBEW is supportive of current efforts in Congress to pass legislation to support advanced nuclear research, development, and deployment.
- Advanced nuclear technology, with the promise of smaller, cleaner, and cheaper reactors, has the potential to create thousands of family-supporting jobs and maintain the baseload generation we will need in a low carbon future.
- The United States should lead the way on strategies to combat climate change, and next generation nuclear power is an important component.
- The IBEW supports efforts to restore the U.S. capability to enrich uranium (using HALEU technology) to unlock the potential of the advanced nuclear sector to create clean energy jobs and carbon-free power

- Effective policies are necessary to spur investment in advanced nuclear technology or the world could lose two-thirds of its nuclear capacity in the next 20 years. Advanced nuclear technology is a fundamental component of an all-of-the-above energy strategy, critical for progress in lower carbon emissions and ultimately helping to reach our climate goals.
- [Letter from Labor Leaders to President Biden in Support of Advanced Nuclear Fuel Facility](#)
- [White Paper on Restoring U.S. Uranium Enrichment Capabilities](#)

## Broadband Expansion

- The IBEW supports policies to deploy high speed broadband service to underserved communities, most notably in rural America, but also in underserved urban communities which can be accomplished by incorporating utilities and rural electric cooperatives in efforts to build out necessary infrastructure.
- High speed broadband has become a modern necessity, the infrastructure upon which dozens of services rely, including medical care and education. The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated the digital divide that exists in the United States between Americans who have, and those who lack, access to modern technology.

## Electric Grid Expansion

- The IBEW supports policies that will modernize our electric grid to ensure a reliable and affordable supply of electricity. Specifically the IBEW would like to see targeted federal investments through grants and government-backed loans, that include high-road labor standards, to help pay for grid improvements to enhance energy security, apply efficiency upgrades and expand opportunities to bring secure and clean energy resources to residential and commercial customers.
- Federal laws regulating electric transmission development should be reformed to facilitate the construction of transmission lines of national significance as well as transmission infrastructure projected for future, not just current, needs.

## The National Child Identification Act

- According to the FBI, there were 365,348 children reported missing in 2020.
- The FBI recommends that parents and guardians of children be proactive and have a Child Identification Kit on hand. Child Identification Kits allow a parent or guardian to collect vital information on their child, including medical information, recent height, weight and pictures, fingerprints and a swab of their DNA all in one place to provide to law enforcement and sparing precious moments and resources during an initial investigation.

- A bi-partisan bill has been introduced in the House of Representatives, H.R. 1764, the National Child Identification Act, which would create a grant program to provide child identification kits to parents who have children in kindergarten and elementary school.
- The IBEW has partnered with [the National Child Identification Program, the National Football League Coaches Association, the AFL-CIO and many other labor and community organizations](#), to provide National Child Identification Kits to their members. The IBEW sees H.R. 1764 the National Child Identification Act as an opportunity to provide this same safety initiative to parents and guardians across the United States.
- [The National Child Identification Act Press Release](#)

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