



IBEW POLICY BRIEF

Chapter 2: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

Since day one, the Biden-Harris administration has put diversity, equity, and inclusion at the top of its agenda. In his first executive order as President, President Biden declared his administration's commitment to "advancing equity for all, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality."¹ In his American Jobs Plan, President Biden outlined the critical need to provide access to quality union jobs.

The American Jobs Plan priorities emphasized opportunities for workers of color and women. It outlines priorities for workers who endure discrimination and systematic economic exclusion — workers who have experienced this reality for generations.

As one of the largest unions in North America, the IBEW has a crucial role in helping the administration meet and exceed these objectives. The IBEW is committed to facilitating the growth of the middle class and fostering a culture that embraces diversity, equity, and inclusion as integral parts of ensuring industry viability.

IBEW's Diversity Efforts

In recent years, the IBEW has engaged in several efforts to improve diversity and inclusion in our union.

IBEW Strong

The IBEW believes in addressing all forms of inequity by organizing and supporting workers of all backgrounds. The program focuses on helping those who have historically been under-represented throughout all IBEW sectors. To that end, the IBEW created the IBEW Strong initiative to support diversity, equity, and inclusion and create opportunities for people from all backgrounds.

¹ Executive Order No. 13985 of Jan. 20, 2021, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, 86 FR 7009.

IBEW Standing Committee on Diversity and Full Inclusion

The IBEW Standing Committee on Diversity and Full Inclusion grew out of a unanimously passed resolution at the 39th International Convention in 2016. The committee includes IBEW officers, leaders, and members from every branch, district, and background, including members from the IBEW women's committee, young workers committee, and the Electrical Workers Minority Caucus (EWMC). The officers of the IBEW, the IBEW Diversity and Inclusion Committee, and a variety of IBEW leaders worked together to lay the foundation for IBEW Strong.

Together, the Standing Committee identified five themes that form the strategic plan to strengthen and grow the IBEW:

1. Organizing/Expanding Membership: Develop and expand outreach, recruitment, and marketing programs to young people, nontraditional and historically marginalized communities
2. Education and Training: Deliver training and education programs that address the importance and need for inclusion to all IBEW members and leaders
3. Building Member Activism and Engagement: Offer inclusive opportunities for members to learn and develop leadership skills and foster local union activism
4. Leadership Advancement: Provide opportunities for all local union members to take on leadership roles
5. Replicating Best Practices: Document, share, and replicate best practices for creating a stronger IBEW through outreach and inclusion programs

IBEW and NECA Joint Statement

(Affirming Commitment to Diversity & Inclusion)

In 2020, the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) and IBEW issued a joint statement setting forth the organizations' collective commitment to promoting and embracing diversity and inclusion. The IBEW and NECA maintain a zero-tolerance policy against discrimination deeply woven into the industry-wide Code and Standard of Excellence. Through awareness campaigns, training, and education, the IBEW and NECA work together to champion policies, practices, and initiatives to foster workplaces free from discrimination and grounded in respect and acceptance.

Pre-Apprenticeships

A pre-apprenticeship is a program or set of services designed to prepare individuals to enter a registered apprenticeship program. Pre-apprenticeships primarily focus on individuals who:

- Have little or no experience in the construction trade
- Experience barriers to employment
- Need to improve their math skills
- Need assistance obtaining supplies or equipment
- Need help meeting the minimum qualifications for a registered apprenticeship

IBEW-affiliated pre-apprenticeship programs primarily focus on providing apprenticeship opportunities to communities that have historically been under-represented in the electrical industry, including women, people of color, and veterans.

Pre-apprenticeship training involves learning basic electrical-industry standards and job-readiness skills, with employer partners providing workforce knowledge and, in some instances, on-the-job training. Pre-apprenticeship programs streamline the recruitment process and help to improve retention and completion rates among apprentices, thus offering a solid path for underrepresented populations to secure high-quality careers.

Improvements in Diversity and Inclusion at the IBEW

A review of a third-party diversity survey demonstrated that between 2015-2019 IBEW diversity efforts are making a positive impact.² During this time:

- IBEW apprenticeship programs saw a 75 percent increase in enrollment by minority men
- IBEW apprenticeship programs saw a 90 percent increase in enrollment by women

Biden-Harris Administration's Commitments to Diversity

Executive Order

(Tackling the Climate Crisis, Creating Good Union Jobs, Achieving Environmental Justice for Historically Disadvantaged Communities)

Historically, the harm and burden from pollution and climate change disproportionately hit marginalized communities. The government has exacerbated this effect by failing to invest in critical infrastructure. All communities deserve housing, transportation, water and wastewater infrastructure, and safe and reliable systems. On January 27, 2021, President Biden issued an executive order to address these injustices while tackling climate change and creating good-paying union jobs.

The order calls for a whole-of-government approach to addressing climate change. The executive order (EO) provides a role for all federal agencies and departments in the transition to cleaner energy. The EO also creates the "Justice40 Initiative." Justice40 directs federal agencies to take steps to ensure that at least 40 percent of the benefits from federal investments in clean energy will benefit disadvantaged communities. The initiative targets populations that have been the most impacted by climate change and pollution.

Justice40 requirements now apply to hundreds of federal government programs and investments in clean energy production and energy efficiency, clean transit, affordable and sustainable housing, training and workforce development, the remediation and reduction of legacy pollution, and the development of clean water infrastructure.

The Justice40 Initiative is vital to fulfilling the administration's promise of a clean energy revolution that creates good-paying union jobs.

² A review of these statistics since 2019 is ongoing; data will be provided upon completion.

Through Justice40, President Biden promises to build sustainable infrastructure and achieve environmental justice for the communities and individuals most impacted by climate change.

Good Jobs Initiative

The Good Jobs Initiative is an effort led by the Department of Labor to provide information to workers, employers, and government agencies to improve job quality and access to good jobs. The good jobs initiative's focus also frees workplaces from discrimination and harassment for all working people. In addition, "Good Jobs" emphasizes people of color, LGBTQ+ people, women, immigrants, veterans, individuals with disabilities, and individuals in rural communities.

"Good Jobs" coordinates the pro-worker policies of the Biden-Harris administration under one program. The program's goal, subject to legal authority, is to ensure agencies can implement job quality standards and equitable pathways to family-sustaining union jobs. Specifically, the initiative will focus on empowering workers by:

- Providing easily accessible information to workers about their rights, including the right to bargain collectively and form a union
- Engaging with employer stakeholders as partners to improve job quality and workforce pathways to good jobs; and
- Supporting partnerships across federal agencies and providing technical assistance on grants, contracts, and other investments designed to improve job quality

The DOL MOUs with DOE, DOC, and DOT

The Departments of Labor and Energy Memorandum of Understanding
The DOL and the DOE released their memo on June 21, 2021

The Departments of Labor and Commerce Memorandum of Understanding
The DOL and the DOC released their memo on June 21, 2021

The Departments of Labor and Transportation Memorandum of Understanding
The DOL and the DOT released their memo on March 7, 2022

As the above agencies began implementing the historic investments in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, they issued a joint memo on their efforts to reach the "Good Jobs" initiatives goal. These memos were written to promote the departments' cooperative efforts to support pathways to millions of good-paying infrastructure jobs. The agencies also emphasized the need for employment opportunities to provide a free and fair choice to form a union. This effort will emphasize drawing on the strength and creativity of every worker in America and bringing in people who have yet to have the opportunity to attain good-paying infrastructure jobs.

Importantly, this agreement sets forth the shared goal of the DOL with the DOE, DOC, and DOT to increase the numbers of underrepresented workers on federal contracts. The agencies strive to improve project diversity through the use of PLAs and registered apprenticeship programs, with an emphasis on recruiting, training, and retaining a more diverse workforce, the agencies pledge to:

- Integrate job quality, labor standards, and equal employment opportunity standards across all transportation infrastructure grants
- Assist state and local government partners and private-sector industry who can identify, train, employ, reskill, and retain a diverse infrastructure workforce
- Engage stakeholders and develop strategic partnerships with organizations, including coalitions that represent underrepresented populations
- Support workforce development strategies that are proven to train workers for successful project delivery (project labor agreements, registered apprenticeship programs)

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