



2025 IBEW POLICY BRIEF

 900 Seventh Street NW
Washington, DC
20001

 (202) 728-6046

 governmentaffairs
@ibew.org

 IBEWGov.org

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THE INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS (IBEW)

Government Affairs Department

Policy Brief

The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Government Affairs Department promotes the IBEW's mission and enhances the welfare of its members. The department manages an influential political, legislative, and grassroots initiative, broad in both scope and impact. It provides IBEW members, elected representatives, and policymakers with specialized legislative and political insights pertaining to the IBEW, supporting labor-forward advocacy efforts across the country. To find out more or view online, visit our website at

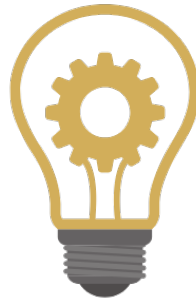
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INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

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DID YOU KNOW?

Funding Federal Programs Requires Authorization Before Appropriation



AUTHORIZATION

Establishes, continues, or modifies federal agencies or programs

Necessary for mandatory federal spending

Legislation is written by congressional committees with jurisdiction over specific subject areas

Allows for the expenditure of funds from the federal budget

A Conference Committee resolves any differences in the authorization bills passed by the House and Senate

APPROPRIATIONS

Outlines how money will be spent on federal program during the following fiscal year

Addresses discretionary federal spending

Annual appropriations measures are written by 12 Appropriations Subcommittees in each chamber of Congress

The same version of the appropriations bill must be passed by both the House and the Senate



The Authorization Process



House and Senate Committees draft authorization bills



House and Senate each pass a version of the authorization bill



If the bills are not the same, a Conference Committee resolves any differences and sends the bill back to both chambers



Authorization is sent to the White House; president passes or vetoes



An authorization bill that becomes law creates, continues, or modifies a program and allows for it to be funded by taxpayer money

Authorization and appropriations bills are related

Authorizations cover multiple years. Authorization laws only allow the government to spend money on the grant program.

Appropriations are the actual dollars the government budgets for the program yearly.

Authorizations in the absence of appropriations

Congress may choose not to fund a program or activity despite it being authorized.

Members of Congress can limit funds, deny funds, or allow funds to expire to limit or prevent agencies from implementing programs.



IBEW Government Affairs Points of Contact

Danielle Eckert: Oversees the legislative and regulatory policies and principles for the IBEW as Assistant to the International President for Government Affairs

governmentaffairs@IBEW.org

Dean Warsh: Director of Government Affairs Department

Dean_Warsh@IBEW.org

Erica Fein: Specializes in manufacturing, immigration, and trade

Erica_Fein@IBEW.org

Stephanie Lezcano: Specializes in transportation, federal and public employees, shipyards, and maritime

Stephanie_Lezcano@IBEW.org

Tim Barnes: Specializes in legislative and regulatory tracking and labor law

Tim_Barnes@IBEW.org

About the IBEW

Founded in 1891, the IBEW has earned its reputation as the world's oldest and most professional electrical union. With 838,000 active and retired members, the IBEW is also the largest labor organization for electrical workers, with members in nearly every sector of the economy: construction, utilities, telecommunications, broadcasting, manufacturing, railroad, and government.



A Message from the International President

This briefing book provides an overview of the IBEW's current legislative priorities and policy development. This includes the IBEW's positions on existing policy as well as action plans for pending policy. Each section reflects the IBEW's core principle of protecting the rights and livelihoods of working people.

The purpose of this overview is to equip members and policymakers with a single resource that explains the rationale for and implications of the policy the IBEW pursues. Each brief is devoted to a single issue. Staff contacts for follow-up can be found on page 1 and references can be found on page 39. Members should refer to this book when advocating before elected officials and as they weigh in on legislation that impacts the IBEW and their fellow members.

The Government Affairs Department's policy work is strictly limited to representing IBEW members. The only issues included in this briefing book are those that directly impact IBEW members. It is not a political product. As such, the IBEW is ready to partner with any elected leaders who support the policy goals delineated here by voting in the interests of IBEW members.

The IBEW is proud to be a leading voice for working families. The IBEW has consistently focused on improving the lives of members while powering an economy that works for everyone. Our commitment to this goal, and the communities it benefits, is resolute.

Kenneth W. Cooper
International President



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Davis–Bacon Prevailing Wage Laws

The Davis–Bacon Act (DBA) and the Davis–Bacon Related Acts (DBRA) ensure workers on federally funded construction projects are paid wages that reflect local standards. This prevents wage suppression, supports middle-class incomes, and promotes high-quality public projects. Though DBA and DBRA are often used interchangeably, the former applies to federally contracted construction projects, while the latter consists of 49 statutes providing for federal funding through grants, loans, and other forms of assistance, to which Congress has added prevailing wage requirements.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) vastly expanded federal investments in infrastructure and renewable energy, further underscoring the importance of tying federal programs to Davis–Bacon, establishing an opportunity for more highly skilled workers to be paid fairly for critical work.

For the first time in decades, the Department of Labor (DOL) modernized Davis–Bacon regulations by closing loopholes, improving enforcement, and aligning wage determinations with current labor market conditions. These protections sustain union wages, support skilled labor, and ensure local workers benefit from public projects, contributing to broader economic stability.

However, challenges remain since some contractors bypass wage requirements. The IBEW advocates for stronger oversight, effective compliance measures, and the expansion of Davis–Bacon coverage to industries like renewable energy, broadband, and advanced manufacturing to protect all workers with fair labor standards.

PRIORITIES

- **Support right of private action:** Amend the DBA to allow workers to file lawsuits directly against contractors for wage violations. This “private right of action” empowers workers to recover unpaid wages and attorney fees and supplements enforcement by the DOL. Strengthening whistleblower protections is also critical to shielding workers from retaliation for reporting violations.
- **Increase funding for enforcement and oversight:** Increase funding for the DOL to enable more audits, investigations, and compliance, preventing wage theft and ensuring contractors meet their Davis–Bacon obligations.
- **Modernize wage determination processes:** Streamlining wage determination processes is essential for accurately reflecting current labor market conditions. This includes improving wage survey frequency and efficiency as well as addressing worker misclassification to prevent underpayment of skilled tradespeople.
- **Expand Davis–Bacon coverage:** Extend Davis–Bacon protections to more federally funded programs and industries including renewable energy, broadband, prefabrication work, and advanced manufacturing, ensuring workers in these growing sectors benefit from fair wage protections.

TALKING POINTS FOR ADVOCACY

“Taxpayers want their dollars to support fair pay for fair work.”

Taxpayers should only fund projects that offer fair wages to skilled labor, never low-wage, low-quality work.

“Protecting prevailing wage strengthens local economies.”

Labor protections like prevailing wage create good-paying jobs that foster economic growth and community stability.

“Labor law is only effective if bad actors are held accountable for violations.”

Strong enforcement prevents wage theft and ensures contractors comply with labor laws.

“Workers in emerging sectors must benefit from the growth they contribute to.”

Expanding prevailing wage protections to future energy technology, broadband, and advanced manufacturing ensures these workers share in economic growth.

“Workers must be able to hold employers accountable, and employers must know there are consequences to cheating workers.”

A private right of action allows workers to seek justice for wage violations without fear of retaliation, ensuring fair pay and true workplace equity.



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NLRA, Union Organizing, and “Right-to-Work” Laws

The 1935 National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) was a groundbreaking law that established workers’ rights to organize, join unions, and engage in collective bargaining to secure better wages, benefits, and working conditions. Over the years, however, employer interference, legal loopholes, and weakened protections have eroded the effectiveness of the NLRA, making it more difficult for workers to fully exercise their rights.

“Right-to-work” laws have also undercut the NLRA. Despite their name, these laws do not secure any rights to a job. Instead they make it harder for workers to join together to negotiate for better wages, benefits, and protections by draining unions of the resources needed to defend members. “Right-to-work” laws allow workers who choose not to pay union dues to still benefit from union representation. This leads to lower wages, fewer benefits, and unsafe working conditions for all workers, not just union members. “Right-to-work” laws are currently in effect in 26 states.

The IBEW recognizes the urgency of addressing these challenges and strongly supports the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act. First introduced in 2021, this critical legislation modernizes the NLRA, strengthens penalties for violating labor laws, safeguards workers’ right to strike, and combats the anti-worker effects of “right-to-work” laws. By supporting the PRO Act, the IBEW aims to restore fairness and fortify the collective bargaining power of workers to negotiate for better conditions in an ever-evolving economy.

The IBEW opposes all federal efforts that threaten to further weaken unions and erode worker protections nationwide, such as the National Right-to-Work Act. In addition to advocating for federal reforms, the IBEW also supports efforts at the state level to repeal “right-to-work” laws. Michigan’s successful 2024 repeal of its “right-to-work” law is an excellent model.

PRIORITIES

- **Support the PRO Act:** Pass the PRO Act, which modernizes the NLRA, strengthens penalties for violations, and expands workers’ rights to organize. Key provisions include accelerating collective bargaining for new unions during first contract negotiations and empowering the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service to mediate disputes.
- **Strengthen public-sector bargaining rights:** Pass the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act to ensure collective bargaining rights for all government employees in states lacking such protections, allowing them to form unions, engage in collective activities, resolve bargaining impasses, and authorize union fee deductions. This would give all state and local government workers collective bargaining rights equivalent to those guaranteed under federal law.
- **Oppose all iterations of “right-to-work”:** Fight legislation that would weaken unions and worker protections by prohibiting dues requirements or undermining union membership in any way.

- **Support and defend the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB):** Ensure adequate funding for enforcement of labor laws and protect recent pro-labor advancements from rollbacks.
- **Oppose decertification mid-contract:** Ensure the stability of unions and workers’ rights by fighting against efforts to destabilize union representation with decertification during active contracts.

TALKING POINTS FOR ADVOCACY

“The PRO Act modernizes labor law to better protect and empower workers in 21st century industries by holding employers accountable for violations.”

The PRO Act strengthens the NLRA by defending the right to organize, speeding up first contract negotiations, and strengthening enforcement of labor law.

“‘Right-to-work’ laws are wrong for workers.”

“Right-to-work” is a dangerous misnomer that undercuts workers’ rights to negotiate for better wages, benefits, and protections.

“Unions are the backbone of middle-class prosperity. They raise wages, improve benefits, and build local economies.”

States with “right-to-work” laws have the highest poverty rates and lowest rates of health insurance coverage.

“Public-sector workers deserve the same bargaining rights as all workers.”

Expanding collective bargaining to public-sector workers with the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act will reduce pay gaps and improve recruitment and retention in essential services.

“Increasing funding for the NLRB will enable it to fully enforce labor laws.”

Labor laws are only effective if employers fear consequences for violations.

“Protecting federal labor standards is key to preserving workers’ rights everywhere.”

Consistent and universal labor protections in every state is the surest way to prevent states from chipping away workers’ rights.



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Federal Worker Rights and FLSA

IBEW members play a crucial role in supporting the U.S. government because their expertise is needed across nearly all federal agencies. They build and maintain critical defense infrastructure at naval and U.S. Coast Guard shipyards, ordnance plants, and other important sites, providing skilled labor as electricians, lineworkers, electronics technicians, and more. Their work extends to maintaining federal buildings and equipment, transmission lines, communications systems, locks and dams, and power generation facilities. IBEW members are also employed in various federal agencies, including the Department of Defense, General Services Administration, Bureau of Reclamation, National Park Service, and Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as the Tennessee Valley Authority, Bonneville Power Administration, and national laboratories such as Sandia and Brookhaven.

IBEW federal workers are critical to national defense, public safety, and maintaining government operations. They ensure military readiness, protect national security, and provide essential public services. Despite their importance, they face challenges under the outdated Federal Wage System (FWS) and Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

IBEW federal workers are governed by the following laws:

- **Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA):** Governs pay, overtime, and work standards for eligible federal employees
- **Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA):** Establishes merit-based hiring and promotion while preventing political interference
- **Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute (FSLMRS):** Protects the rights of federal employees to unionize, bargain collectively, and address workplace grievances through the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA)

Emerging threats that politicize federal jobs, like Schedule F, jeopardize the merit-based civil service system. Schedule F would allow political appointees to fill jobs previously protected by the merit system, opening the door for politically motivated hiring and firing. This undermines the principle that federal employees should serve the public based on their skills and expertise, not their political views. The IBEW opposes Schedule F and advocates for reforms to ensure fair pay and protection for federal employees.

PRIORITIES

- **Strengthen the FWS:** Align FWS and General Schedule wage areas, add locality pay, and restore prevailing wage to ensure fair compensation.
- **Modernize wage surveys:** Expand surveys to include federal contractors and high-skill private-sector employers to improve pay accuracy.
- **Pass the Locality Pay Equity Act:** Align federal pay scales, ensuring workers in the same areas are compensated equitably.
- **Oppose Schedule F:** Protect civil service workers from politically motivated dismissals by opposing Schedule F or similar policies.

- **Address pay inequities:** Add locality pay and ensure equitable annual pay adjustments for FWS employees to reduce disparities.
- **Focus on long-term solutions:** Replace temporary measures, like special pay rates, with systemic reforms for workforce stability.

TALKING POINTS FOR ADVOCACY

“Federal workers deserve fair pay for their important work.”

Aligning FWS and General Schedule wage areas will ensure equitable compensation.

“Modernizing wage surveys will ensure rates of pay are informed by accurate information.”

Including federal contractors and high-skill employers on wage surveys will provide accurate pay data.

“Enacting the Locality Pay Equity Act will prevent workers from being paid differently for the same work.”

Aligning federal pay scales will codify fair pay practices, resulting in a more equitable federal workplace with fewer pay disparities.

“The civil service operates best when it is merit-based, not politically driven.”

Schedule F threatens stability and fairness by opening the door to politically motivated hiring and firing.

“Federal workers deserve real reform, not short-term fixes.”

Systemic reforms, not temporary measures, are key to a stable federal workforce.

“Fair pay helps recruit and retain skilled workers for important jobs.”

Fair compensation attracts the high-value skilled workers that are necessary for secure national defense and principled public service.



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Worker Rights on the Railroad

IBEW railroaders play a vital role in keeping the U.S. economy moving. Passenger rail connects communities and contributes to lower overall emissions, while nearly 40 percent of all freight in the United States travels by rail, making it a cornerstone of our economy and infrastructure. IBEW railroaders work hard to maintain electrical systems, signals, and the safety of passenger and freight transportation.

The IBEW advocates for stronger protections under the Railway Labor Act (RLA) to safeguard workers' rights to organize and collectively bargain, and opposes cost-cutting measures like precision scheduled railroading (PSR), which puts profits ahead of worker safety.

As the railroad industry progresses towards electrification, the IBEW views this transition as an opportunity for the electrical trade to create more skilled union jobs while also contributing to the reduction of harmful emissions in transportation. Supporting these efforts is essential to ensuring future generations of workers are equipped to meet the evolving needs of the freight and passenger rail industry while maintaining high standards for safety and worker welfare.

In December 2024 IBEW railroaders saw a victory with the passage of the Railroad Employee Equity and Fairness Act. Thanks to the Senate's bipartisan leadership, this legislation ended unjust benefit cuts affecting 200,000 railroad workers. The IBEW commends the Senate for prioritizing railroaders, ensuring they receive the benefits they rightfully deserve.

PRIORITIES

Pass the Veteran Benefits Enhancement Act: Ensure veterans in the railroad industry receive fair treatment and benefits, including protection of their military retirement pay.

Pass the Railway Safety Act: Address industry-wide safety issues, including regular and thorough safety inspections and measures to prevent derailments and other accidents.

Advocate for paid sick leave for railroad workers: Pass legislation such as the Freight Rail Workforce Health and Safety Act, which guarantees all railroad workers receive at least seven paid sick days.

Push for electrification of the railroad network: Support policies that promote the electrification of the freight and passenger railroad network to help reduce emissions and create skilled jobs for electrical workers.

Strengthen labor standards in rail projects: Advocate for strong labor standards, including Davis-Bacon prevailing wages, project labor agreements, and worker classification protections in all federally funded rail projects.

TALKING POINTS FOR ADVOCACY

“Rail safety is a national priority.”

The Railway Safety Act addresses crucial issues that affect workers and the public, including improved safety measures like regular inspections.

“Electrification creates jobs and reduces emissions.”

Electrifying rail is a twofold solution. It boosts economic development while addressing climate change.

“Veterans deserve fair benefits.”

The Veteran Benefits Enhancement Act will protect the unemployment and sickness benefits of railroad workers who are also veterans.

“Railroad workers deserve guaranteed paid sick leave like everyone else.”

The Freight Rail Workforce Health and Safety Act ensures all railroad workers receive paid sick leave.

“High-road labor standards benefit workers and communities.”

Strong labor standards in rail projects, like prevailing wages and fair classification, protect workers and their communities by supporting a highly trained and well-paid workforce.



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Registered Apprenticeships

Registered apprenticeships are recognized as the gold standard for workforce training, particularly in the electrical and construction trades. These programs combine classroom instruction with hands-on training, ensuring workers are highly skilled and prepared for modern industries such as renewable energy, advanced manufacturing, and broadband expansion. The IBEW's apprenticeship system, in partnership with electrical contractors, provides comprehensive training that not only develops technical skills but also offers wages, health benefits, and worker protections. Additionally, IBEW apprenticeships operate at no cost to participants or taxpayers unlike nonunion programs, a unique advantage in workforce development.

Registered apprenticeships are under threat in two significant ways: the rise of Industry-Recognized Apprenticeship Programs (IRAPs) and efforts to “de-skill” the electrical trade. IRAPs allow employers to self-certify their training programs without meeting the rigorous standards of the Department of Labor (DOL) or state-registered programs. IRAPs undermine worker protections, safety, and wages by allowing for lower-quality training that puts workers and communities at risk.

Efforts to de-skill the workforce threaten wages, safety, and project integrity. De-skilling occurs widely in renewable energy sectors, such as with the creation of subclassifications that replace highly trained electricians with lower-paid “solar technicians.” De-skilling is a product of private sector-only training which, unlike union apprenticeships, does little to ensure high standards for workers.

The IBEW advocates for eliminating IRAPs and de-skilling as well as expanding registered apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships that introduce participants to and prepare them for long-term careers in construction. These community-based programs target underrepresented populations, including residents of rural communities, women, minorities, veterans, and formerly incarcerated individuals, to meet the enormous demand for skilled workers over the next decade.

PRIORITIES

- **Oppose the Developing America’s Workforce Act:** This legislation would codify IRAPs by reinstating a rule that enables third-party, DOL-approved entities to recognize and oversee private sector apprenticeship programs, a measure that would dangerously undermine the rigorous standards of registered apprenticeship programs.
- **Oppose funding of low-road training programs and so-called “apprenticeships”:** Legislation like the USA Workforce Investment Act would fund low-quality training programs that do not guarantee workers a job on day one. This bill would prop up these sub-par training programs with taxpayer funds over proven, high-quality, union-registered apprenticeships.
- **Defend registered apprenticeship programs:** Fight against any expansion of IRAPs into the construction industry where they would compromise training standards, safety, and worker rights.
- **Combat de-skilling efforts in workforce legislation:** Oppose initiatives that replace skilled electricians with lower-paid classifications such as solar technicians. The IBEW also opposes any legislation that allows for the creation of new classifications that devalue skilled trades, such as creating occupations that overlap with existing construction occupations and designations. These efforts invariably reduce the safety and quality of projects.

- **Expand guidance counselor training nationwide:** Ohio’s school counselor license amendment successfully partnered the Ohio Board of Education with the Affiliated Construction Trades (ACT Ohio) and other entities to develop a required training for guidance counselors on careers in construction building trades. The IBEW aims to expand similar initiatives as well as pre-apprenticeship programs across other states to increase exposure to and preparation for career opportunities in the skilled trades.
- **Protect journeyman-to-apprentice ratios:** Proper ratios are critical to providing apprentices with appropriate supervision and training, as well as maintaining high standards and safety on the job overall.
- **Promote a diverse and local workforce:** The IBEW has expanded outreach to underrepresented populations to ensure that all workers have access to high-quality apprenticeship programs and family-sustaining careers.

TALKING POINTS FOR ADVOCACY

“IBEW apprenticeships are the gold standard: boosting local economies, supporting families, and promoting diversity with the highest quality training.”

IBEW apprenticeships provide the rigorous education and hands-on experience needed for community sustaining workforce development.

“Registered apprenticeships are necessary because safety is non-negotiable.”

Registered apprenticeships ensure workers are properly trained and supervised, reducing workplace accidents with high standards for every project.

“IRAPs dangerously undermine worker safety with lower standards and inadequate training.”

IRAPs allow for substandard self-certification that leads to lower wages, fewer training hours, and reduced safety standards, especially in construction.

“De-skilling undermines fair wages and project integrity while encouraging corporate greed in new industries.”

Lower-paid job classifications like solar technicians undercut skilled electricians while compromising safety and quality in renewable energy projects.

“The more people understand how IBEW apprenticeships can change their lives and communities, the better.”

Expanding outreach through creative initiatives like the Ohio school counselor license amendment will help meet the current demand for skilled workers and make the middle class a reality for more Americans.



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Project Labor Agreements (PLAs)

Project labor agreements (PLAs) are critical to ensuring that construction projects, particularly those funded by federal dollars, are completed on time, within budget, and by a highly skilled workforce. These agreements are negotiated between contractors and trade unions before a project begins to set the terms for matters like wages, working conditions, safety protocols, and dispute resolution. For IBEW members, PLAs ensure they are paid the prevailing wage in the region, receive benefits, and work in safe conditions, avoiding the low wages and substandard conditions often seen in nonunion projects. These agreements also require a significant percentage of the workforce be composed of apprentices, creating a steady pipeline of skilled workers.

PLAs are not only important because they provide safeguards for workers. They also provide employers with dispute resolution and “no-strike” clauses that prevent labor stoppages. Additionally, PLAs encourage local hiring so workers benefit from projects built in their communities.

Equally important, these agreements benefit contractors who gain access to reliable and trained workforces essential to managing large-scale projects. PLAs have been shown to result in better project outcomes, like reduced delays and fewer cost overruns, because better-trained workers are more productive and labor disputes are preempted. An existing executive order by the previous administration requiring PLAs on federal projects over \$35 million was a key win the IBEW aims to protect.

PRIORITIES

- **Defend and expand PLAs on federally assisted projects:** Oppose any efforts to repeal, ban, or limit PLAs on federal projects that would lower wages, benefits, and safety standards, including any new executive orders.
- **Protect strong labor provisions in federal grants:** Oppose attempts to repeal labor provisions in federal grants such as the inclusion of PLAs, registered apprenticeships, and pro-worker standards on federally funded projects.
- **Advocate for PLAs in state and local projects:** Promote PLAs in state and local projects, especially those funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and CHIPS and Science Act, ensuring high-quality standards and local job opportunities.

TALKING POINTS FOR ADVOCACY

“PLAs protect workers and ensure project success.”

PLAs create high-paying jobs, ensure safety, prevent labor disputes, support workforce development in the form of apprenticeships, and maintain high standards for quality and efficiency.

“PLAs strengthen local communities.”

PLAs prioritize local hiring with a focus on women, minorities, veterans, and members of rural communities, fostering a diverse workforce.

“PLAs save time and money for taxpayers.”

PLAs reduce delays and cost overruns, with union labor being 14 percent more productive than nonunion workforces.

“Expanding PLAs on federal projects ensures taxpayer-funded projects support good jobs.”

The executive order on the use of PLAs on large federal projects ensures federal projects support skilled union labor and create good jobs that spark economic growth.

“PLAs protect workers with fair wages and strong labor standards.”

PLAs guarantee prevailing wages, preventing wage theft and protecting workers.

“Removing or limiting PLAs degrades every project’s quality and always harms workers.”

Efforts to repeal PLAs or limit them in state and local projects would harm wages, worker protections, and project quality.



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Worker Misclassification

Fighting against worker misclassification is key to protecting fair wages, job security, and workplace safety. Misclassification occurs when employers incorrectly label workers as independent contractors instead of employees. This allows employers to skip paying taxes and avoid providing benefits like healthcare, unemployment insurance, and workers' compensation. Misclassified workers lose critical protections like fair wages, safety training, and the right to organize.

When workers are misclassified, they pay more in taxes, lose access to benefits, and face more job insecurity. For example, a misclassified worker can lose up to \$16,729 in wages and benefits every year. Misclassification harms the industry by forcing law-abiding employers to compete with those who break the rules. This is especially dangerous in industries like construction, where unsafe working conditions can result in injuries and death.

IBEW is committed to eliminating worker misclassification to ensure all workers are treated fairly and receive the protections they deserve. To achieve this, IBEW supports the ABC test, a simple legal standard that makes it difficult for employers to misclassify workers. The ABC test assumes workers are employees unless the employer can prove:

- a. The worker is free from control: The worker must be free from employer control when deciding how, when, and where their work gets done.
- b. The work is not part of the employer's main business: The worker's job must be different from the company's core business. For example, a roofing company would not meet this test when hiring a freelance roofer.
- c. The worker has their own business: The worker must have their own business doing the same type of work. This could include having multiple clients or paying for their own insurance.

The ABC test is important because it gives clear rules on whether a worker is an employee or an independent contractor. This clarity protects workers by making it harder for employers to exploit loopholes. By using the ABC test, the IBEW ensures all workers, especially those in high-risk industries like construction, are treated fairly and have access to the benefits and protections they deserve.

PRIORITIES

- **Combat worker misclassification:** Properly classify workers, especially in construction, to ensure full benefits and protections like healthcare, safety training, and unemployment insurance.
- **Support the ABC test:** Adopt the ABC test for determining employee status, ensuring stronger worker protections that guard against unethical employers. Establish this test federally by supporting passage of the PRO Act.
- **Strengthen enforcement:** Increase funding and resources for agencies to enforce misclassification laws effectively by holding employers accountable with real penalties.
- **Advocate for fair competition:** Ensure employers who comply with labor laws are not undercut by bad actors who misclassify workers to evade responsibility for their workforce.

TALKING POINTS FOR ADVOCACY

“Misclassification allows employers to avoid their responsibility to their workforce.”

Misclassification deprives workers of key benefits that employers must provide such as healthcare and unemployment insurance.

“Misclassification forces responsible employers to compete with those who break the rules.”

Misclassification undermines fair competition by creating an uneven playing field that benefits law-breaking employers.

“Misclassification results in lost wages and benefits.”

Misclassified workers lose significant pay and benefits, with some losing up to \$16,729 annually.

“Misclassification is a race to the bottom.”

Misclassification deprives workers of training, safety, and job security, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation.

“The PRO Act expands rights to more workers and penalizes employers for violating those rights.”

The PRO Act would make it harder for employers to misclassify workers and would extend essential protections to more workers.

“Labor protections only work when penalties for violating workers’ rights are strictly enforced.”

Increased funding to agencies will allow for the level of enforcement necessary to prevent violations.



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Worker Benefits and Taxes

Tax policy directly affects the financial well-being of IBEW members by impacting take-home pay, benefits, and middle-class stability. Changes in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 eliminated key deductions for union dues, work-related expenses, and essential worker benefits, placing a greater financial burden on union households. The Tax Fairness for Union Workers Act seeks to reinstate deductions for union dues and job-related expenses.

Additionally, proposals to eliminate the employer-deduction for workers' health care benefits would increase out-of-pocket costs for IBEW members with negotiated health plans and lead to worse health outcomes for members and their families.

Lastly, there are growing concerns regarding proposals to weaken overtime protections under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Bills such as the Overtime Pay Flexibility Act would block increases to the salary threshold for overtime eligibility, significantly reducing wages for workers, especially in sectors like construction and manufacturing. States may also seek waivers from FLSA overtime standards, undermining federal protections that ensure fair compensation for extra hours worked. The IBEW opposes these efforts to eliminate or weaken overtime protections because these safeguards are vital to fair compensation.

PRIORITIES

- **Pass the Tax Fairness for Union Workers Act:** Restore above-the-line deductions for union dues, uniforms, tools, and other job-related expenses to reduce the tax burden on union households.
- **Expand relief for work-related expenses:** Expand tax credits or deductions for safety equipment, uniforms, and other necessary expenses incurred on the job by workers.
- **Protect health benefits from taxation:** Oppose proposals to cap employer deductions for worker benefits or to reinstate the “Cadillac tax,” ensuring union members retain access to affordable, comprehensive health coverage.
- **Oppose efforts to eliminate overtime protections:** Preserve FLSA protections, including overtime pay eligibility, to ensure fair compensation. Oppose bills like the Overtime Pay Flexibility Act and state-level efforts to weaken or waive overtime pay requirements.
- **Ensure fair compensation for all workers:** Enact strong nationwide standards that guarantee overtime protection for all workers, preventing exploitation by employers and ensuring high-quality work is compensated fairly.
- **Oppose restrictions on unemployment insurance (UI):** Protect and strengthen UI benefits to ensure workers, including those on strike, can rely on this crucial safety net during economic hardship.

TALKING POINTS FOR ADVOCACY

“Union members deserve tax relief for their many expenses.”

The Tax Fairness for Union Workers Act reinstates essential deductions for union dues, work-related expenses, uniforms, and tools, helping to alleviate financial strain on working families.

“Protecting employer-sponsored benefits is a top priority for union members. They negotiated those benefits.”

Proposals to tax or cap health insurance and other benefits threaten the financial stability of union families. Reinstating the “Cadillac tax” would penalize workers who secured benefits through collective bargaining by undermining the affordability of essential benefits.

“Fair taxes put the burden where it belongs: on corporations, not working families.”

Shifting tax burdens onto workers while giving breaks to corporations is unacceptable. A just tax system ensures workers can support their families, access vital benefits, and contribute to local economies.

“Overtime protections are essential for fair compensation.”

Efforts to weaken overtime pay protections, like the Overtime Pay Flexibility Act, reduce wages for workers who rely on overtime to support their families. We must protect overtime pay eligibility so workers are fairly compensated for extra hours worked.

“Overtime pay is essential to union families. It deserves to be protected by law.”

Weakening overtime protections leads to lost wages and reduced financial security that disproportionately affects union households. Preserving the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and pursuing nationwide overtime standards will prevent worker exploitation more broadly.

“Reliable unemployment insurance is essential to a family’s financial security.”

Efforts to restrict unemployment insurance eligibility, reduce benefits, or privatize the system undermine the financial security of workers. Strong unemployment insurance (UI) ensures workers have the support they need during economic hardship.



IBEW Policy Brief

January 2025

OSHA's Role in Protecting Worker Safety and Health

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is the cornerstone of workplace safety and health. Established in 1970, OSHA sets and enforces standards to ensure safe and healthy working conditions for America's workforce. For IBEW members who often work in high-risk environments in construction, manufacturing, and energy sectors, OSHA's regulations are essential to safeguarding their well-being and ensuring workplace equity.

Recent policy shifts, budgetary changes, and proposals to roll back OSHA standards threaten to weaken these worker protections. Exempting small businesses and first-time violators from fines, reducing penalties for safety violations, and rolling back protections like heat safety and personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements would harm IBEW members in high-hazard industries such as construction and manufacturing, potentially increasing workplace injuries and fatalities.

PRIORITIES

- **Increase OSHA funding and staffing:** Increase federal funding for more inspectors, enhanced training programs, and improved enforcement capabilities. OSHA is dramatically underfunded. Currently, the budget accounts for only \$3.39 for each worker it is required to protect.
- **Strengthen safety standards:** Implement stronger safety regulations, including mandatory heat protection measures, enhanced PPE requirements, and updated fall protection standards tailored to high-risk industries. Counter legislation like the REVERSE OSHA Mandates Act, which aims to repeal OSHA's emergency authority, and the SCRUB Act which prioritizes cost savings over worker safety.
- **Expand worker protections:** Apply OSHA protections to all workers, regardless of employer size or industry, including total coverage for contract and gig workers.
- **Modernize standards and enhance training for emerging industries:** Encourage OSHA to collaborate on standards for new and evolving industries such as renewable energy, broadband installation, and advanced manufacturing. Support initiatives to provide comprehensive safety training for workers in these high-risk industries by focusing on emerging hazards and updating OSHA standards.
- **Promote worker rights and whistleblower protections:** Strengthen protections for workers who report safety violations, and advocate for increased penalties for employers who retaliate against whistleblowers.

TALKING POINTS FOR ADVOCACY

“OSHA is vital because safe jobs are productive jobs.”

Emphasize the economic benefits of strong OSHA standards, including fewer workplace injuries and fatalities, lower healthcare costs, and increased productivity.

“When it comes to high-risk sectors, investing in safety saves lives.”

Funding OSHA is critical to ensuring adequate inspections and enforcement, particularly in construction and manufacturing. Advocate for increased funding so OSHA can strictly enforce its high standards.

“Every worker in every industry deserves the same high-road protections.”

Universal safety standards that include all industries and workers, including gig and contract workers, ensure no worker is left in dangerous conditions.

“Workers must be able to report safety violations without fearing retaliation.”

Whistleblowers play a critical role in safe workplaces. They must be empowered to speak up without the fear of employer reprisal.

“The stronger the safeguards, the safer the workplace.”

An empowered OSHA can protect workers with mandatory heat protections, updated fall protections, and enhanced PPE requirements. Efforts to diminish OSHA authority, such as the REVERSE OSHA Mandates Act and SCRUB Act, will only increase accidents and embolden violators.

“Adapting to the future of work requires modernizing OSHA standards.”

Updating OSHA standards will address the new and evolving risks in renewable energy, broadband, and advanced manufacturing.



IBEW Policy Brief

January 2025

Just Transition for Energy Workers

The transition to cleaner energy is reshaping the energy landscape, creating significant challenges for workers in the fossil fuel industry. The IBEW represents approximately 85,000 members in coal and natural gas, many of whom are now at risk of job displacement as these industries contract. Between 2011 and 2022, more than 25,000 megawatts of coal-fired generation capacity were retired, and since 2021, 37 gigawatts of coal-fired capacity have been shut down, impacting the communities that rely on these jobs.

A just transition for energy workers is vital to maintaining good-paying jobs, stabilizing local economies, and leveraging the skills of experienced energy workers in emerging sectors such as renewable energy. The IBEW advocates for federal legislation that ensures fossil fuel workers are not left behind as the future of energy evolves. This includes policies that retain workers, provide retraining opportunities, and promote long-term community investment in regions affected by plant closures.

Federal investments, such as those in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), have incentivized renewable and advanced energy projects, but additional legislation is necessary to support workers directly impacted by the changing energy landscape. With initiatives like the Inter-agency Working Group for Coal and Power Plant Communities and Economic Revitalization, the federal government recognized the importance of prioritizing workers displaced by the ongoing energy transition by directing public funding and incentivizing private investment to the hardest hit communities.

The IBEW continues to push for policies that prioritize workers' needs, revitalize affected areas, and promote workforce development in the renewable energy economy.

PRIORITIES

- **Pass a worker retention tax credit:** Pass legislation that provides refundable payroll tax credits to employers who retain workers displaced by plant closures or capacity reductions. This measure is essential for workforce stability and protecting families from economic harm.
- **Expand retraining programs:** Robustly fund federal and state retraining programs, including registered apprenticeship programs and labor-management training initiatives to equip displaced workers with the skills to transition into advanced manufacturing, renewable energy, and other emerging sectors.
- **Promote community investment:** Direct federal resources toward revitalizing communities impacted by fossil fuel plant closures. Investments in infrastructure, workforce development, and local businesses can provide long-term economic stability and opportunity for impacted regions.
- **Strengthen workforce protections:** Strictly enforce labor standards to ensure that new jobs in future energy sectors adhere to the prevailing wages and fair labor practices critical for sustaining middle-class careers.

TALKING POINTS FOR ADVOCACY

“Workers are the backbone of the energy transition.”

Strong labor standards like prevailing wage help to ensure new energy sectors provide long-term family-sustaining careers.

“Federal policies must put displaced workers first.”

The future of energy cannot come at the expense of the workers who powered the nation for decades. Policies like worker retention tax credits are vital to sustaining local economies as they undergo shifts in energy production.

“Experienced, highly skilled workers are community assets worth preserving.”

Federal and state investments in retraining programs like registered apprenticeships can ensure displaced workers add to their existing skills and continue to contribute to their communities as they transition to new sectors.

“Investing in communities ensures a just transition.”

By investing in small businesses and workforce development, the federal government can address the impact of plant closures and stabilize these communities with long-term solutions.

“A just transition is a bipartisan priority.”

Together, we can balance economic growth, climate goals, and labor protections so no worker or community is left behind in the energy transition.



IBEW Policy Brief

January 2025

Permitting Reform

Permitting reform is critical for the IBEW because it directly affects job opportunities for members in energy generation, transmission, and infrastructure projects. Delays in project approvals create bottlenecks that hinder job creation and economic growth. Streamlined permitting processes, such as those proposed in the Energy Permitting Reform Act of 2024, promise to modernize U.S. infrastructure by accelerating energy project development. These projects will foster the energy independence that will address both national security needs and the nation's rapidly growing demand for energy.

For IBEW members, timely project approvals mean steady, good-paying jobs in essential areas like energy transmission, renewable energy facilities, and other energy infrastructure. While the IBEW supports reforms to make permitting more efficient, it also emphasizes the need to maintain environmental protections, community involvement, and labor standards. A balanced approach ensures that infrastructure projects move forward without compromising environmental integrity or workers' rights.

PRIORITIES

- **Address transmission bottlenecks:** Designate national interest transmission corridors, expedite interregional transmission projects, and improve interconnection processes for energy systems of the future.
- **Support worker protections:** Ensure permitting reforms require high labor standards and create good-paying union jobs on critical infrastructure projects.
- **Push for reform that prioritizes taxpayers, ratepayers, and workers:** Reductions in project delays mean price stability for ratepayers and family-sustaining wages for workers on safe, efficient worksites.
- **Balance efficiency and oversight:** Streamline permitting processes to result in responsible development that protects environmental integrity and invites meaningful public participation.

TALKING POINTS FOR ADVOCACY

“Reducing bottlenecks is essential to modernizing the grid and creating thousands of good-paying union jobs.”

As the demand for energy grows, modernizing the aging grid is increasingly urgent. Permitting reform that prioritizes labor standards ensures this vital work is performed quickly and safely by skilled workers.

“Streamlined permitting can coexist with environmental safeguards and community input.”

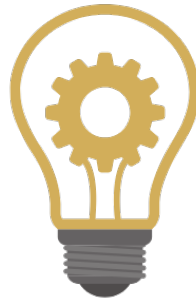
Permitting reform should never neglect climate, worker, or community priorities.

“Faster permitting can reduce delays that destabilize energy prices and cost ratepayers billions annually.”

Efficient permitting will have widespread economic impact, improving costs for projects, households, and communities.

“Permitting reforms contribute to national security by speeding up infrastructure projects that establish energy independence.”

National security hinges on the United States' ability to meet its own energy demand, minimizing reliance on foreign energy sources.



DID YOU KNOW?

U.S. Senate and House Rules Differ Substantially



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Powerful House Rules Committee; more challenging to circumvent committee consideration of legislation

Individual representatives have little power; no practice of “holds”

The Speaker of the House can approve non-controversial measures through the suspension of rules

The number and kinds of amendments are limited; non-germane (off-topic) amendments are not allowed unless permitted by a special rule

Motion for the previous question, which requires only a simple majority vote, ends debate and brings the vote on a measure to the floor

The presiding officer has a great deal of discretion for recognizing representatives; Members of Congress do not often challenge the presiding officer’s rulings

SENATE

No powerful committee determines rules for the body; easier to circumvent committee consideration of legislation

Individual senators have a great deal of power and can place “holds” on certain measures

The Majority Leader of the Senate often approves non-controversial measures through unanimous consent agreements

Non-germane (off-topic) amendments are allowed unless cloture is invoked or disallowed by a unanimous consent agreement

Cloture motion to end debate requires three-fifths of senators’ support; senators can filibuster most legislation, in effect necessitating a 60-vote threshold

The presiding officer has little discretion in recognizing individual senators; Senators often challenge the presiding officer’s rulings



IBEW Policy Brief

January 2025

Energy Tax Credits and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) included transformative tax credits like the Production Tax Credit (PTC), Investment Tax Credit (ITC), and Clean Hydrogen Production Tax Credit (45V), as well as expanded credits for nuclear energy (including 45U). These credits, most of which are tied to prevailing wage and apprenticeship requirements, create significant opportunities for IBEW members by incentivizing projects across a range of technologies including hydrogen, wind, solar, geothermal, advanced nuclear, carbon capture, and other future energy infrastructure.

The inclusion of labor standards on these tax credits ensures fair compensation, robust workforce training, and equitable economic benefits for workers and their communities. Specifically, the 45V credit for hydrogen production and tax credits for nuclear energy projects hold particular promise, providing job opportunities in the building and maintaining of critical infrastructure and promoting the development of tomorrow's energy systems.

The IBEW strongly supports the expansion of these credits and advocates for their fair application across all technologies. The IBEW also calls for stringent oversight to ensure compliance with labor standards and to prevent misuse of these incentives, guaranteeing that union workers remain at the forefront of this transformation.

PRIORITIES

- **Preserve labor enhancements in the IRA:** Protect prevailing wage and apprenticeship requirements across all credits, including the PTC, ITC, 45V, and nuclear energy credits, ensuring fair pay and workforce development for union jobs.
- **Strengthen oversight and compliance for 45V:** Enforce prevailing wage and apprenticeship standards for all hydrogen production projects. Ensure developers meet emissions goals and apply 45V equitably across all eligible hydrogen technologies (e.g., blue, green, and advanced methods).
- **Level the playing field for 45U:** Establish a presumption of compliance with prevailing wage requirements for nuclear projects covered by a collective bargaining agreement or a project labor agreement.
- **Support tax credits for nuclear energy projects:** Advocate for tax incentives for advanced nuclear energy projects that create long-term, high-quality jobs for IBEW members maintaining and upgrading these facilities.
- **Expand training opportunities:** Tie tax credits to expanded workforce training programs to prepare IBEW members for hydrogen, nuclear, and other emerging energy technologies.
- **Promote equity across energy sectors:** Ensure tax credit incentives and labor standards are applied equitably to all energy technologies to create union jobs across a broad range of industries.
- **Ensure accountability across all tax credits:** Demand strict compliance with labor and environmental standards to maximize the benefits of tax credits for workers and communities while preventing misuse by developers.

TALKING POINTS FOR ADVOCACY

“Labor protections in the IRA ensure the energy industries of the future are built with good-paying, long-term jobs.”

The prevailing wage and apprenticeship requirements tied to IRA tax credits ensure economic growth reaches workers by preventing wage suppression in newer industries.

“Tax incentives only work when there is accountability.”

Labor standards on tax credits create union jobs across energy sectors while meeting environmental goals, but only if applied broadly to all new technologies and strictly enforced.

“Nuclear energy creates long-term jobs that place union workers at the forefront of this vital industry.”

Tax incentives for advanced nuclear energy like 45U ensure union workers are central to maintaining and upgrading this vital infrastructure.

“Hydrogen energy in all its forms is necessary for the energy future.”

The 45V credit should support hydrogen production using diverse methods, including all advanced technologies.

“Tying tax credits to training programs ensures a reliable, well-trained, and well-paid workforce for emerging industries.”

Incentivizing workforce training helps prepare IBEW members for energy jobs of the future.



IBEW Policy Brief

January 2025

Emerging Energy Technologies and Workforce Excellence

The United States stands at the crossroads of an energy revolution. Emerging technologies such as carbon capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS), advanced nuclear power, and modernized transmission systems are essential for energy reliability, economic prosperity, and the nation's climate goals. These three innovative technologies are not only critical for addressing the challenges of renewable energy integration but also for ensuring the longevity of key industries that provide high-quality jobs.

CCUS technology captures carbon emissions from power plants and industrial facilities, safely storing them underground or repurposing them for commercial use. This allows traditional energy sources like coal and natural gas to remain part of the energy mix while significantly reducing emissions. For communities that rely on fossil fuel-based industries, CCUS is a lifeline that preserves jobs and stabilizes local economies.

Advanced nuclear technology is also key, providing reliable, zero-carbon power around the clock. This provides a critical baseload energy unlike sources like wind and solar that are intermittent. In this way, nuclear energy ensures grid stability, supports American manufacturing, and strengthens energy security. By extending the lifespan of existing nuclear reactors and investing in next-generation designs, the United States can continue to lead in energy innovation while creating thousands of well-paying, unionized jobs.

Modernizing transmission infrastructure is another element at the core of a responsible energy transition. A powerful and efficient grid is essential for integrating renewable energy sources, ensuring reliability, and meeting growing electricity demands. Building new transmission lines not only facilitates the expansion of energy sources but also creates opportunities for skilled workers to contribute to critical infrastructure projects, driving local economic growth.

Labor standards, such as Davis–Bacon prevailing wage laws, apprenticeship utilization, and OSHA-certified safety training, are central to ensuring all these projects are completed safely, quickly, and with a commitment to pro-worker protections. Through its apprenticeship programs and safety initiatives, the IBEW equips workers with the skills to meet the demands of these transformative projects, providing employers with a reliable and highly capable workforce.

PRIORITIES

- **Enforce Davis–Bacon prevailing wage standards:** Prevailing wage laws ensure fair compensation, promote ethical competition, and create a level playing field where contractors prioritize quality, safety, and expertise.
- **Expand apprenticeship utilization requirements:** Requiring registered apprenticeships fosters workforce development, ensuring a pipeline of skilled workers who can execute complex energy projects with precision and efficiency.
- **Mandate OSHA-certified safety training:** Comprehensive safety training reduces accidents, improves morale, and increases productivity while minimizing the costs and delays associated with workplace injuries.

- **Leverage Right-of-First-Refusal (ROFR) policies:** ROFR policies offer incumbent utilities the opportunity to build transmission projects first. These policies prioritize unionized utilities for critical projects, safeguarding labor standards and ensuring reliable, efficient energy infrastructure development.
- **Tie incentives to labor-standards compliance:** Tying labor standards to federal funding maximizes the economic benefit of energy projects by promoting fair competition, skilled labor, safe worksites, and community investment.

TALKING POINTS FOR ADVOCACY

“A modern grid is essential for the energy demands of the future.”

Upgrading transmission infrastructure is urgent for energy integration and meeting growing electricity demands.

“Nuclear’s round-the-clock availability not only stabilizes the grid and other renewables like wind and solar—it also supports good union jobs.”

Investing in nuclear’s uniquely zero-carbon capacity is how the United States remains at the forefront of this critical industry.

“We do not have to choose between reducing emissions and preserving good jobs.”

Investing in carbon capture allows fossil fuel plants to contribute to an all-of-the-above energy solution while preserving much-needed long-term jobs.

“Fair wages support fair competition, especially in new industries.”

Davis–Bacon prevailing wage laws ensure workers are fairly compensated while enabling contractors to compete based on skill and efficiency. This is key to the longevity of these newer sectors.

“Strong safety standards are the cornerstone of smart business.”

Mandating OSHA training, especially in rapidly innovating sectors, is critical to protecting workers, reducing liability, and increasing productivity.

“Current energy challenges can only be met with what unions provide: experience, efficiency, and excellence.”

Through its gold standard apprenticeship program, the IBEW provides employers with a steady supply of reliable, highly skilled workers prepared for the energy transition.



IBEW Policy Brief

January 2025

Broadband Opportunities

Access to reliable high-speed broadband is essential for modern life, enabling education, healthcare, remote work, and economic opportunities. For IBEW members, broadband expansion not only promotes connectivity—it also creates good-paying union jobs and contributes to strong local economies. With funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), including the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program, the IBEW is leading efforts to bridge the digital divide while ensuring broadband projects uphold high-road labor standards.

The BEAD program aims to connect underserved areas, with at least 19 states already receiving \$1 billion each in grants as of mid-2023. Expanding broadband infrastructure guarantees steady union work in construction, installation, and maintenance while fostering economic growth in communities nationwide. The IBEW remains committed to ensuring these projects benefit workers and their communities by requiring fair wages, strong labor protections, and high-quality fiber-optic infrastructure.

PRIORITIES

- **Protect BEAD funding:** Oppose any reductions or repeal of funding for the BEAD program under the BIL, including the Build America, Buy America (BABA) component.
- **Ensure union compliance and robust oversight:** Support federal and state mandates for broadband projects to adhere to labor laws, pay prevailing wages, and follow collective bargaining agreements. Good governance of BEAD funding means not only unionized workers, however, but also ongoing oversight that ensures program requirements and project commitments are fulfilled.
- **Strengthen grant guidelines:** Pre-certify contractors based on labor compliance and rigorous reporting for accountability.
- **Support a fiber-first approach:** Make fiber-optic technology the standard for broadband deployment and oppose federal funding for inferior technologies, such as low-earth satellite and fixed wireless.
- **Leverage state support:** Harness bipartisan state-level support for broadband funding to align local and federal priorities with high-road union employers.
- **Counter skepticism around BEAD:** Address concerns raised by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) about the BEAD program and advocate for continued federal support and accountability to ensure the program meets its goals.

TALKING POINTS FOR ADVOCACY

“Broadband expansion creates good jobs and economic growth in every community.”

Broadband creates good-paying union jobs, supports local economies, and attracts business investment, driving economic development in communities nationwide.

“High labor standards for workers mean high standards for projects.”

Broadband infrastructure projects that adhere to prevailing wage laws and prioritize unionized workforces ensure fair compensation and sustainable high-quality networks.

“Voters agree that every community requires reliable broadband to thrive.”

Enthusiasm for BEAD on the state level is bipartisan and easily aligns with the benefits of a unionized workforce.

“Reliable broadband prevents decline in underserved areas by offering opportunities for employment and connection.”

Reliable broadband prevents economic stagnation in rural and underserved areas, fostering business development and connecting communities to each other and the modern economy.

“Taxpayer dollars should only be spent on durable and scalable solutions like fiber-optic infrastructure.”

Prioritizing fiber-optic infrastructure ensures taxpayer dollars are spent on durable, scalable, and effective broadband solutions, with alternative technologies used only when necessary.



IBEW Policy Brief

January 2025

Trade Policy

Trade policy directly affects the livelihoods of IBEW members by shaping wage standards, the competitiveness of domestic industries, and the availability of high-quality jobs. For decades, trade policies prioritized keeping tariffs low. This created a race to the bottom as companies moved production to countries with weak labor, environmental, and human rights standards, knowing they would face low tariffs when goods were imported back to the United States for sale. This has led to millions of lost jobs at shuttered factories, resulting in a depressed U.S. labor market.

Additionally, China's unfair trade practices, such as state subsidies, forced labor, and dumping, have further undercut American industries like manufacturing and renewable energy. In the United States, "right-to-work" laws and anti-union tax incentives in certain states have exacerbated challenges by luring businesses away from unionized regions.

To level the playing field for workers, barriers to the U.S. market such as the imposition of tariffs in strategic industries should be combined with strong industrial policy, such as that found in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and the CHIPS and Science Act.

PRIORITIES

- **Impose tariffs strategically, not across the board:** Tariffs should target imports made under abusive labor conditions, that ignore environmental standards, or otherwise put American workers and producers at an unfair disadvantage. Across-the-board tariffs, on the other hand, are counterproductive. They are not intended to end the unfair practices associated with many imported goods and are likely to raise consumer prices on items that will never be produced in the United States at scale.
- **Pair strategic tariffs with strong industrial policy:** To help create American manufacturing jobs and resilient supply chains, tariffs must be combined with other industrial policy tools like tax incentives, procurement preferences, and government investment.
- **Include enforceable labor standards in trade agreements:** Require trade agreements to ban forced labor, protect collective bargaining, and enforce labor standards through mechanisms like the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement's Rapid Response Mechanism, while also strengthening global labor standards that prevent races to the bottom on wages and working conditions.
- **Reauthorize and expand Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA):** Expand TAA eligibility and increase funding to support workers displaced by foreign competition.
- **Close the de minimis loophole:** End the exploitation of the \$800 de minimis import threshold, which allows goods, particularly from China, to bypass duties and inspections, by supporting the bipartisan Import Security and Fairness Act that closes the loophole.
- **Support U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) cases for critical U.S. infrastructure:** Address national security risks by supporting USTR action to rebuild U.S. shipyards and supply chains in response to China's unfair trade practices, with the IBEW joining the USTR Section 301 trade case on shipbuilding to bolster American jobs, national defense, and critical maritime assets.

TALKING POINTS FOR ADVOCACY

“When fair trade policy includes labor standards, the American workforce grows in strength and numbers.”

Trade agreements must include enforceable labor standards to level the playing field and prevent worker exploitation.

“TAA is the responsible way to address the loss of jobs to foreign competitors like China.”

Reauthorizing this law ensures more displaced workers receive the training and support they need to secure new, high-quality jobs.

“No country should be allowed to bypass rules that protect American workers making American goods.”

The de minimis loophole allows nations like China to get around important protections. The Import Security and Fairness Act protects American jobs by requiring proper tariffs and inspections on low-value imports.

“Investing in manufacturing means more than good jobs. It means returning dignity to many communities while increasing national security.”

Domestic manufacturing is a top priority because it addresses multiple economic issues on the national and local level.

“Combating China’s inhumane and unfair trade practices with stricter rules is an economic and moral necessity.”

Enforce stricter trade rules to counteract the subsidized industries, forced labor, and dumping that harm U.S. workers.



IBEW Policy Brief

January 2025

Revitalizing U.S. Manufacturing and Union Jobs

The IBEW plays a vital role in North America's manufacturing sector, representing workers who produce a wide array of essential goods including batteries, semiconductors, transformers, electric motors, control panels, wire and cable, and advanced energy components. These industries are critical to economic growth and provide reliable, high-quality union jobs.

For decades, policies offshoring manufacturing to low-cost markets have devastated domestic production and union jobs, contributing to a decline in the number of IBEW members in manufacturing from 400,000 in the 1980s to 30,000 today. However, recent legislation including the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), and CHIPS and Science Act are revitalizing U.S. manufacturing. These laws aim to return production to the United States and create opportunities in electric vehicles, semiconductors, and renewable energy components.

Manufacturing is central to the IBEW's mission to protect and expand family-supporting union jobs. Policies that incentivize domestic production while maintaining labor standards can reverse decades of decline in this sector. These efforts enable IBEW to regain market share in U.S. factories, secure stable employment for members, and support the transition to a clean energy economy.

IBEW workers are essential to producing critical components for the future, from solar panels and electric vehicle (EV) batteries, to wind turbines and advanced semiconductors. By prioritizing union labor and domestic production, federal policies ensure these investments translate into good-paying jobs for IBEW members and long-term economic stability for American communities.

PRIORITIES

- **Ensure federal investments in manufacturing include labor standards:** Pass legislation that requires federal grants, loans, and tax credits for manufacturing projects to incentivize or mandate prevailing wages, union labor, and robust worker protections. Agencies overseeing these programs should commit manufacturers to training, equity, and the use of union labor throughout supply chains.
- **Update the Walsh-Healey Act:** Modernizing this law would establish a national prevailing wage for all federal manufacturing contracts, creating a level playing field for union workers while counteracting anti-union policies like "right-to-work" laws.
- **Pass the PRO Act:** Enacting the PRO Act would protect workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively, ensuring manufacturing jobs remain high-road opportunities.
- **Support Build America, Buy America (BABA):** Ensure all federal infrastructure projects are made with U.S.-produced iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials. This helps create domestic jobs and strengthens U.S. manufacturing, particularly in industries critical to the IBEW.

TALKING POINTS FOR ADVOCACY

“The fastest way to invest in manufacturing is by supporting union jobs.”

Federal manufacturing incentives should require strong labor standards that prioritize domestic production with family-sustaining union jobs.

“Updating outdated labor protections will promote equity in a growing sector.”

Modernizing the Walsh-Healey Act ensures fair wages and protections for workers on federal manufacturing contracts, promoting equity in this important sector.

“Manufacturing workers deserve policies that lead to high-road employment.”

Laws like the PRO Act ensure manufacturing workers have the right to organize and negotiate for better wages, benefits, and protections.

“Federal investments in manufacturing must prioritize union labor to truly foster opportunity.”

Government incentives should tie funding to meaningful collaboration with unions, ensuring that new manufacturing jobs are high-quality, long-term opportunities.

“Build America, Buy America is a manufacturing policy that puts workers first.”

The Build America, Buy America Act strengthens U.S. manufacturing and supports union jobs by requiring federal infrastructure projects to use domestically produced materials.

“Union labor can quickly strengthen supply chains that the growing renewable energy economy relies on.”

Support policies that drive domestic production of renewable energy components by securing union jobs in the low-carbon economy.



IBEW Policy Brief

January 2025

Emerging Opportunities for IBEW Members in Transportation

The IBEW recognizes the potential of emerging transportation industries to create good-paying, union jobs while also supporting critical infrastructure. The IBEW is optimistic about these opportunities in electrification, modernization of rail systems, public transit expansion, and domestic shipbuilding. From installing electric vehicle (EV) charging networks to electrifying railroads and supporting U.S.-built ships under the Jones Act, these initiatives align with the IBEW's mission to ensure workers benefit from the modernization of the nation's infrastructure.

IBEW members are uniquely positioned to lead in building, maintaining, and upgrading the electrical systems that power transportation networks. Federal policies that support investments in these areas must include high labor standards such as Davis-Bacon prevailing wages, apprenticeship utilization, and project labor agreements (PLAs). These protections ensure fair wages and shared benefits for workers and their communities while boosting economic and national security.

The IBEW strongly advocates for the Jones Act, which supports U.S. shipbuilding and ensures national defense readiness. Weakening or repealing this law would threaten jobs and security. Similarly, policies like the Energizing American Shipbuilding Act and Short Sea Shipping Act are vital to revitalizing the maritime industry.

PRIORITIES

- **Support the Jones Act:** Pass the Jones Act which protects union jobs in shipyards and ensures U.S. ships are built and crewed by American workers.
- **Pass the Energizing American Shipbuilding Act:** Support the Energizing American Shipbuilding Act that mandates the use of U.S.-built tankers for liquified natural gas exports, revitalizing shipbuilding and strengthening national security.
- **Pass the Short Sea Shipping Act:** Support the Short Sea Shipping Act that would eliminate tax disincentives for using U.S.-built vessels, increasing maritime job opportunities.
- **Invest in electrifying rail systems:** Increase federal funding for rail electrification to create skilled jobs for IBEW members, modernize infrastructure, and reduce emissions.
- **Expand public transit investments:** Invest in subways, light rail, and commuter rail to create stable union jobs while improving the transportation infrastructure that communities rely on.
- **Install EV infrastructure:** Pass legislation supporting EV charging networks to ensure projects are completed by qualified union electricians and adhere to labor standards.

TALKING POINTS FOR ADVOCACY

“The Jones Act ensures American ships are built by union workers.”

The Jones Act is vital to national defense because it guarantees only American workers both build and crew American ships.

“The Energizing American Shipbuilding Act prioritizes national security and good jobs.”

Under this law, liquefied natural gas will always be exported on American-made tankers, a boon to the industry, workers, and national security.

“Much-needed investments in subways and commuter rail will result in the creation of good union jobs.”

Expansion of public transit has the potential to create stable union jobs while also improving transportation infrastructure.

“Electrifying rail solves many problems: reducing emissions, connecting communities, and creating good jobs.”

The rail industry has the power to transform communities with vital infrastructure, good jobs, and improved environmental integrity.

“EV charging infrastructure must be built by skilled union electricians only.”

This growing industry is a great opportunity to create high-paid, high-skill jobs.



Key IBEW Accomplishments

(2021-2024)

Over the past four years, the IBEW has achieved significant victories in legislation, infrastructure investments, and policy changes that have directly benefited members and advanced the interests of organized labor. These accomplishments have created and protected good-paying union jobs, strengthened worker protections, and prioritized investments in industries critical to IBEW members, such as renewable energy, manufacturing, and transportation.

Working closely with Congress, the White House, and coalition partners, the IBEW has been instrumental in shaping policies that safeguard the livelihoods of its members, expand job opportunities, and secure labor standards in a rapidly evolving economy.

American Rescue Plan (2021) (P.L. 117-2)

- Provided critical pandemic relief, including funding for state and local governments that supported infrastructure projects that employed IBEW members
- Secured pension-stabilization measures to protect retirement benefits for union members

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (2021) (P.L. 117-90)

- Provided \$1.2 trillion investment in infrastructure, including roads, bridges, broadband, and renewable energy projects, created tens of thousands of union jobs
- Expanded funding for electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure and renewable energy projects, ensuring IBEW members lead the modernization of the nation's electrical systems

Inflation Reduction Act (2022) (P.L. 117-169)

- Provided the largest investment in clean energy in U.S. history, including tax credits tied to labor standards like Davis-Bacon prevailing wages and registered apprenticeship utilization, creating good-paying jobs in carbon neutral energy sectors
- Strengthened domestic manufacturing through incentives for clean energy components, ensuring American-made materials are used in IBEW projects

CHIPS and Science Act (2022) (P.L. 117-1670)

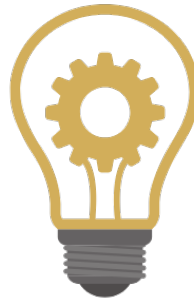
- Invested \$280 billion in U.S. semiconductor manufacturing and research, creating opportunities for IBEW members in high-tech construction and electrical work
- Tied funding to prevailing wage requirements, ensuring projects benefit union workers

Fiscal Responsibility Act (2023) (P.L. 118-5)

- Protected key federal investments in infrastructure and energy while avoiding cuts to critical programs that support union jobs

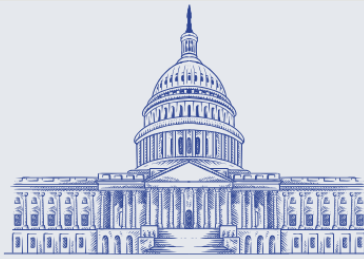
Accelerating Deployment of Versatile, Advanced Nuclear for Clean Energy (ADVANCE) Act (2023) (P.L. 118-67)

- Promoted investment in existing and new nuclear energy technologies, preserving and expanding jobs for IBEW members in this critical sector
- Advanced safety and modernization initiatives to secure the role of union workers in the growing renewable energy economy



DID YOU KNOW?

How a Bill Becomes a Federal Law



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SENATE

INTRODUCTION

A representative or senator introduces a bill by filing it with the House/Senate clerk

COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

- Bills are referred to committees for debate, analysis, and amendments
- Simple majorities are needed to pass committees in both the House and Senate
- Bills are often sent to subcommittees for extra analysis, especially on niche issues

FLOOR DEBATE

House

- Bill is debated and amended
- Simple majority needed to pass

Senate

- Bill is debated and amended
- *3/5 majority needed to end debate*
- Simple majority needed to pass

FINAL VOTES/ CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

- If both chambers pass an identical bill, it is sent directly to the president
- If they pass different bills, a conference committee is formed of representatives and senators who try and find a compromise
- Bills that pass conference committee must then pass both the House and Senate

PRESIDENT'S SIGNATURE OR VETO

- A bill becomes **law** after a president signs it or after 10 days if they take no action
- The president can reject a bill with a **veto**
- Congress can **override** the veto with a 2/3 majority vote in each chamber



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**900 Seventh Street NW
Washington, DC
20001**



202-728-6046



governmentaffairs@ibew.org



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