



IBEW Policy Brief

January 2025

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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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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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.



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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



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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.



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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.