



January  
2026

# IBEW POLICY BRIEF

## Davis–Bacon Prevailing Wage

The Davis–Bacon Act (DBA) and the Davis–Bacon Related Acts (DBRA) ensure workers on federally funded construction projects are paid fair wages that reflect local standards. These laws prevent wage suppression, support middle-class incomes, and promote high-quality public projects. Though DBA and DBRA are often used interchangeably, the former applies to federally contracted construction projects while the latter refers to statutes that apply to certain non-federal projects that receive various forms of federal financial assistance.

Federal investments in energy infrastructure have expanded significantly in recent years, highlighting the importance of linking prevailing wage protections to federally funded projects. These prevailing wage requirements on federally funded projects ensure that highly skilled workers, like those of the IBEW, are paid appropriately for their work.

For the first time in decades, the Department of Labor (DOL) modernized Davis–Bacon regulations in 2023 by closing loopholes, improving enforcement, and aligning wage determinations with the current labor market. These updated regulations help preserve family-supporting wages, support skilled labor, incentivize workforce development, and guarantee that local workers benefit from public projects, which in turn contributes to broader economic stability in that community.

Challenges remain, however, since some contractors bypass wage requirements. This is why the IBEW advocates for stronger oversight, more effective compliance measures, and the expansion of Davis–Bacon to emerging industries like renewable energy, broadband, and advanced manufacturing.

### PRIORITIES

- **Support a private right of 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 while aiding DOL enforcement. Additionally, stronger whistleblower protections will encourage workers to report violations by protecting them from retaliation.
- **Increase funding for enforcement and oversight:** Increase funding for the DOL to facilitate more audits, investigations, and compliance activities, which will prevent wage theft and ensure contractors meet their Davis–Bacon obligations.
- **Modernize DOL's wage-setting processes:** Streamlining DOL's wage surveys is essential for accurately reflecting current labor market conditions. This includes increasing the frequency of wage surveys and rejecting attempts by low-road contractors to invent new subclassifications that receive less pay.
- **Expand Davis–Bacon coverage:** Extending Davis–Bacon protections to more federally funded programs and industries including energy, broadband, prefabrication work, and advanced manufacturing. This will ensure workers in these growing sectors benefit from fair wage protections.

## TALKING POINTS

**“Taxpayers want their dollars to support fair pay.”**

Taxpayers want to fund projects that offer fair wages to skilled labor.

**“Protecting prevailing wage strengthens local communities.”**

Labor protections like prevailing wages create good-paying jobs that promote stability and economic growth.

**“These laws only work if bad actors are held accountable for violations.”**

Strong enforcement is the best way to prevent 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, advanced manufacturing, and housing ensures these workers share in economic growth.

**“Workers must be able to hold employers accountable. And employers must know there are consequences when they cheat workers.”**

A private right of action allows workers to seek justice for wage violations without fear of retaliation.



January  
2026

# IBEW POLICY BRIEF

## 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 for 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 jobs for workers. Instead, “right-to-work” laws make it harder for workers to negotiate better wages, benefits, and protections because these laws drain unions of the resources needed to defend members. “Right-to-work” laws allow workers who decline to pay union dues to still benefit from union representation. This inevitably 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 for workers in these states by supporting 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 strengthen the collective bargaining power of workers to fight for better conditions in an ever-evolving economy.

Furthermore, the IBEW opposes all federal attempts to 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 state-level efforts to repeal “right-to-work” laws, including replicating the model of Michigan’s successful repeal of “right-to-work” in 2024.

### PRIORITIES

- **Support the PRO Act:** The PRO Act modernizes the NLRA, strengthens penalties for violations, bans employer “captive audience” meetings, and strikes down states’ “right-to-work” laws. Key provisions include accelerating collective bargaining for new unions during first contract negotiations and empowering the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service to mediate disputes.
- **Support the Faster Labor Contracts Act:** The Faster Labor Contracts Act resolves first-contract disputes by binding arbitration within 120 days of workers voting to join a union.
- **Pass the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act:** This law strengthens public-sector collective bargaining rights by ensuring these rights for all government employees in states lacking such protections. This allows these workers to form unions, engage in collective bargaining activities, resolve bargaining standoffs, and authorize union fee deductions, providing all state and local government workers with bargaining rights equal to those guaranteed under federal law.
- **Oppose all iterations of “right-to-work”:** Fight legislation that would prohibit dues requirements or undermine union membership in any way to weaken unions and worker protections.

- **Defend the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB):** Ensure adequate funding for enforcement of labor laws and protect all pro-worker advancements from rollbacks.
- **Oppose mid-contract decertification:** Protect workers' rights and the stability of contracts by prohibiting efforts to undermine union representation with decertification petitions during active contracts.

## TALKING POINTS

**“The PRO Act holds employers accountable by modernizing labor law to better protect workers in twenty-first century industries.”**

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 misleading term that actually undercuts workers' rights to negotiate better wages, benefits, and protections.

**“Unions are the backbone of the middle class. Unions 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 bargaining rights, too.”**

The Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act will expand collective bargaining to public-sector workers in all states, reducing pay gaps and improving retention in essential services.

**“Increased funding for the NLRB will allow it to properly enforce labor laws.”**

Labor laws are only effective if employers fear consequences like investigations and steep fines for violations.

**“Protecting federal labor standards is essential to workers' rights everywhere.”**

Consistent labor protections in every state are the surest way to prevent states from chipping away workers' rights.



January  
2026

# IBEW POLICY BRIEF

## Registered Apprenticeships

Registered apprenticeships are 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 well prepared for modern industries such as renewable energy, advanced manufacturing, and broadband expansion. The IBEW partners with electrical contractors to design apprenticeship programs that provide comprehensive and current training while also offering strong wages, health benefits, and worker protections. And unlike non-union programs, IBEW apprenticeships afford all of this while operating at no cost to participants or taxpayers.

The growing push for substandard training programs, such as Industry-Recognized Apprenticeship Programs (IRAPs) with minimal government oversight along with broader efforts to de-skill the electrical trade, continue to threaten the IBEW's gold-standard training programs. IRAPs allow employers to self-certify their training programs without meeting the rigorous standards of the Department of Labor (DOL). This inevitably means IRAPs undermine worker protections, safety, and wages by allowing for lower-quality training that puts workers and communities at risk. Substandard workforce development programs also threaten 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 "technicians."

The IBEW supports eliminating low-road training models that undermine the high standards of registered apprenticeships. The IBEW opposes de-skilling efforts by these programs and advocates for the expansion of registered apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships that introduce participants to and prepare them for long-term careers in construction. Registered apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships are essential to meeting the enormous demand for skilled workers in the decade ahead.

### PRIORITIES

- **Oppose funding of low-road training programs and other non-registered apprenticeships:** Taxpayer dollars should not fund low-quality training programs that do not guarantee jobs on day one.
- **Defend the longstanding registered apprenticeship system:** The resurgence of IRAPs threatens training standards, safety, and worker rights.
- **Combat de-skilling efforts in workforce development legislation:** Initiatives that replace skilled electricians with lower-paid, less skilled subclassifications, such as "technicians," will harm workers and compromise the quality of projects. This also applies to any law that allows for the creation of new classifications that devalue skilled trades, such as designations that overlap with existing construction occupations.
- **Expand guidance counselor training nationwide:** State and local governments must develop mandatory guidance counselor training on careers in construction and the building trades.

- **Protect journeyman-to-apprentice ratios:** To ensure apprentices work safely while receiving quality training, DOL must ensure that program sponsors adopt protective apprentice-to-journeyman ratios.

## TALKING POINTS

**“IBEW apprenticeships are the gold standard. They boost local economies, support families, and build communities 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 and maintaining high standards for every project.

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

IRAPs allow for substandard training programs that lead to lower wages, fewer training hours, and reduced safety standards.

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

Lower-paid job classifications like solar technicians undercut skilled electrical workers 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 will help meet the current demand for skilled workers and make the middle class a reality for more Americans.



January  
2026

# IBEW POLICY BRIEF

## Project Labor Agreements (PLAs)

Project labor agreements (PLAs) help ensure that construction projects are completed on time, within budget, and by a highly skilled workforce. These agreements are negotiated between contractors and unions before a project begins to set the terms for wages, working conditions, safety protocols, and dispute resolution. For IBEW members, PLAs ensure prevailing wages, benefits, and safe work conditions. They are essential to avoiding the substandard conditions often seen on nonunion projects.

PLAs are not only important because they safeguard workers. They provide employers with dispute resolution protocols and “no-strike” clauses that prevent labor stoppages and guarantee labor peace. PLAs also ensure that apprentices enrolled in bona-fide registered apprenticeship programs make up a significant percentage of the workforce, establishing a steady pipeline of skilled workers. Additionally, PLAs encourage local hiring, so workers benefit from projects built in their communities.

Equally important, these agreements also benefit contractors because they gain access to reliable and trained workforces for large-scale projects. PLAs consistently result in better project outcomes, like reduced delays and fewer cost overruns, since labor disputes are resolved and better-trained workers are more productive.

### PRIORITIES

- **Defend and expand PLAs on federally assisted projects:** PLAs ensure fair wages, good benefits, and high safety standards. Oppose any efforts to repeal, ban, or limit PLAs on federal projects including any new executive orders.
- **Encourage the use of PLAs on any new grant programs:** All new funding streams should be paired with the stability and reliability that PLAs provide.
- **Protect strong labor provisions in federal grants:** Oppose all attempts to repeal any labor provisions in federal grants, including PLAs, registered apprenticeships, and other pro-worker standards.
- **Advocate for PLAs on state and local projects:** PLAs contribute to successful projects and fairly paid workforces regardless of size or funding source. Pushing for PLAs on local projects contributes to PLAs becoming the norm for all construction projects.

### TALKING POINTS

#### **“PLAs protect workers and contribute to project success.”**

PLAs create good-paying jobs, ensure safety and quality, prevent labor disputes, and support workforce development with high-quality apprenticeships.

#### **“PLAs strengthen local communities.”**

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

**“PLAs save time and money for taxpayers.”**

PLAs reduce delays and cost overruns: union labor is 14 percent more productive than nonunion labor.

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

PLAs on large federal projects ensure those projects support skilled union labor and create good jobs that spark economic growth.

**“PLAs protect workers with strong labor standards.”**

PLAs guarantee prevailing wages, prevent wage theft, and protect workers from unsafe conditions.

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

Every project benefits from workers who are protected by a PLA.





January  
2026

# IBEW POLICY BRIEF

## Worker Misclassification

Eliminating 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.

Worker misclassification is extremely common in the construction industry. The Department of Labor (DOL) estimates that up to 30 percent of employers misclassify some of their workers as independent contractors. Misclassification deprives workers of minimum wage, overtime pay, unemployment insurance, workers' compensation, and other benefits.

Not only do misclassified workers lose access to these many benefits, they also pay more in taxes and face greater job insecurity. A misclassified worker can lose up to \$16,729 in wages and benefits every year. Misclassification also harms industries by forcing law-abiding employers to compete with those who break the rules, driving a race to the bottom in labor standards.

IBEW is committed to eradicating worker misclassification so all workers receive the protections they deserve. The first step is mandating 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 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 provides 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. The ABC test will ensure that all workers, especially those in high-risk industries like construction, are treated fairly and have access to the benefits and protections they deserve.

### PRIORITIES

- **Fight worker misclassification:** Properly classify workers, especially in construction, to ensure full protections and benefits, such as fair pay, overtime, health insurance, unemployment insurance, safety training, and other benefits.
- **Support the ABC test:** Promote the adoption of the ABC test for determining employee status to expose unethical employers. Establish this test federally by supporting passage of the PRO Act.
- **Strengthen enforcement:** Increase funding and resources for agencies that enforce misclassification laws so they can hold employers accountable with real penalties.

- **Oppose broadening the definition of “employee”:** Laws that widen the Fair Labor Standards Act’s definition of “employee” will increase worker misclassification and strip essential protections from millions of workers.
- **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

### **“Misclassification allows employers to avoid their responsibility to their workers.”**

Misclassification deprives workers of key benefits that employers must provide to employees, such as fair pay, overtime, workers’ compensation, 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 a year.

### **“Misclassification is a race to the bottom.”**

Misclassification deprives workers of fair pay, overtime, and job security, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation.

### **“The PRO Act extends 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 also 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.



January  
2026

# IBEW POLICY BRIEF

## Worker Retention

The transition to lower-carbon energy is reshaping the energy landscape, creating significant challenges for workers in the fossil fuel industry. The IBEW represents more than 85,000 members in coal and natural gas, many of whom are now at risk of job displacement as these industries shrink. Between 2011 and 2022, more than 25,000 megawatts of coal-fired generation capacity were retired, and 37 gigawatts of coal-fired capacity have also been shut down since 2021. This has devastated the communities that rely on these jobs. Though some coal plants will remain online for longer, many more retirements are expected.

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

Sensible laws and policy are necessary to support workers directly impacted by the changing energy landscape. Under the Trump administration, however, initiatives like the Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities and Economic Revitalization Activities have been shut down. This group directed public funding and incentivized private investment to communities displaced by the ongoing energy transition.

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

### PRIORITIES

- **Pass a worker retention tax credit:** Pass laws that provide refundable payroll tax credits to employers that retain workers displaced by plant closures or capacity reductions. This measure is essential for workforce stability.
- **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 towards revitalizing communities impacted by fossil fuel plant closures. Investments in infrastructure, workforce development, and local businesses can provide long-term stability and opportunity for affected 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

**“Workers are the backbone of the energy transition.”**

Strong labor standards like prevailing wages help 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 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 lessen the impacts 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 by the energy transition.



January  
2026

# IBEW POLICY BRIEF

## Permitting Reform

Permitting reform is critical for the IBEW because it directly affects job opportunities for members in energy generation, transmission, infrastructure, and other areas. Delays in project approvals create unnecessary bottlenecks that hinder job creation and economic growth. Streamlined permitting processes at federal agencies, shorter timelines for judicial review, and adequate resources to review project permits would accelerate energy and infrastructure project development. These improvements would also facilitate much-needed energy independence and help meet the nation's rapidly growing demand for energy.

While the IBEW supports reforms to make permitting more efficient, it also understands the need for environmental protections, community involvement, and strong labor standards. A balanced approach ensures that infrastructure projects move forward without compromising environmental integrity or workers' rights.

### PRIORITIES

- **Prioritize permitting for energy projects:** Energy projects should be prioritized for streamlined permitting, including projects for critical minerals, nuclear, hydrogen, fossil fuels, electric transmission, and renewables, as well as carbon capture, sequestration, storage, and removal.
- **Incentivize pro-worker policies:** Projects with labor standards (e.g., PLAs, registered apprenticeship utilization, neutrality, local hire, responsible contracting) should be prioritized.
- **Incentivize stability:** Political actors should not be able to revoke permits once issued except under extraordinary circumstances.
- **Streamline permitting:** Require interagency environmental review for standardization/coordination and establish agency review timelines to speed up the permitting process.
- **Fund the permitting process:** Increase staffing and resources at federal agencies responsible for environmental reviews.
- **Limit legal hurdles:** Provide requirements to address litigation delays to ensure projects are completed efficiently.
- **Protect procedural integrity:** Maintain processes under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other foundational environmental laws that allow for public input and transparency.

### TALKING POINTS

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

As the demand for energy grows, modernizing the aging grid is becoming more urgent. Permitting reform that prioritizes labor standards ensures this vital work is performed quickly and safely by the most 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 every year.”**

Efficient permitting will improve costs for projects, communities, and households.

**“Permitting reforms contribute to national security by speeding up 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.



January  
2026

# IBEW POLICY BRIEF

## Energy Tax Credits and High-Road Jobs

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 (45U). These credits, most of which are tied to prevailing wage and apprenticeship utilization requirements, created significant opportunities for IBEW members by spurring projects across a range of technologies, including hydrogen, wind, solar, geothermal, advanced nuclear, carbon capture, and other future energy infrastructure.

The inclusion of these labor standards in the IRA tax credit programs leveled the playing field by incentivizing fair compensation, robust workforce training, and equitable economic benefits for workers and their communities.

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) prematurely phased out most of the IRA's tax credit programs, including those applicable to solar, wind, and hydrogen energy projects, resulting in lost job opportunities.

The IBEW strongly supports reinstating these tax credits. The IBEW also calls for strict oversight to ensure compliance with the tax credits' labor standards and to prevent misuse of these incentives. This will help guarantee that the jobs created by these tax credits remain well-paying, high-road, family-sustaining jobs.

### PRIORITIES

- **Preserve labor standards on all clean energy tax credits:** Protect prevailing wage and apprenticeship utilization requirements across all credits, including the PTC, ITC, 45V, and nuclear energy credits, ensuring fair pay and workforce development for union jobs.
- **Reinstate the IRA's clean energy tax credits, including the PTC, ITC, and 45V tax credits:** Restoring these tax credits while maintaining their labor standards will restart job creation and opportunity for IBEW members in renewable energy technologies and industries.
- **Level the playing field for clean energy:** Establish a presumption of compliance with prevailing wage requirements for all clean energy projects, including nuclear energy, covered by a collective bargaining agreement or a project labor agreement (PLA).
- **Support tax credits for nuclear energy projects:** Push for tax incentives for advanced nuclear energy projects that create long-term, high-quality union jobs to maintain and upgrade 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 standards to maximize the benefits of tax credits for workers and communities while preventing misuse by developers.

## TALKING POINTS

**“Labor protections on energy tax credits ensure the energy industries of the future are built with good-paying, long-term jobs.”**

Tying prevailing wage and apprenticeship requirements to energy tax credits ensures economic growth reaches workers by preventing wage suppression in newer industries.

**“Premature cuts to energy tax credits harm workers.”**

Labor thrives when businesses have certainty. Over 10 years of certainty from the energy tax credits has been cut short, which means far less work for tens of thousands of workers in construction, utilities, and manufacturing.

**“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 when applied to all new technologies and strictly enforced.

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

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





January  
2026

# IBEW POLICY BRIEF

## 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 grid-enhancing technologies (GETs) 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 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 helps preserve jobs and stabilize local economies.

Advanced nuclear technology is also key to the energy revolution, providing reliable, zero-carbon power around the clock. Unlike intermittent sources like wind and solar, this provides a critical baseload energy. 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.

Grid-enhancing technology 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 demands for electricity. In addition to the necessary work of building out new transmission lines, upgrading existing lines and improving their efficiency will also facilitate the expansion of energy generation and create more opportunities for skilled electrical workers.

Labor standards, such as prevailing wage and apprenticeship utilization requirements, as well as OSHA safety training requirements, are central to ensuring all these projects are completed safely, efficiently, and with a commitment to worker protections. Through its apprenticeship programs and safety initiatives, the IBEW meets these goals, providing employers with a reliable and highly capable workforce equipped with the skills necessary for these transformative technologies.

### PRIORITIES

- **Enforce Davis–Bacon prevailing wage standards:** Prevailing wage laws ensure fair compensation, promote ethical competition, and create a level playing field for contractors who prioritize quality, safety, and expertise.
- **Expand apprenticeship utilization requirements on CCUS, advanced nuclear, and GETs:** Requiring registered apprenticeships promotes workforce development, ensuring a pipeline of skilled workers able to 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 safe and 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

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

Upgrading transmission infrastructure is urgent for energy integration, energy independence, and skyrocketing energy demand.

### **“Nuclear’s round-the-clock availability not only stabilizes the grid and complements 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 high-skill, long-term jobs.

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

Davis–Bacon prevailing wage laws ensure workers are fairly compensated while allowing 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 evolving 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 programs, the IBEW provides employers with a steady supply of reliable, highly skilled workers prepared for the energy transition.



January  
2026

# IBEW POLICY BRIEF

## Broadband Opportunities

Access to reliable high-speed broadband is essential for modern life. It enables education, health care, remote work, and economic opportunities for everyone. For IBEW members, broadband expansion not only promotes connectivity; it also creates good-paying union jobs that contribute to 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. The expansion of broadband infrastructure to achieve this goal guarantees steady work in construction, installation, and maintenance while fostering economic growth, often in communities left behind by the digital revolution.

The IBEW remains committed to ensuring these projects benefit both workers and their communities by requiring fair wages, strong labor protections, and high-quality fiber-optic infrastructure. This commitment is why the IBEW is opposed to the SPEED for BEAD Act, which would prohibit state boards that distribute BEAD money from considering, among other things, a bidder's (1) compliance with prevailing wage requirements on past projects, (2) history of signed project labor agreements (PLAs), or (3) commitment to union neutrality when evaluating how to award BEAD money.

### 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 labor standards compliance and robust oversight:** Support federal and state mandates for broadband projects to comply with labor laws and pay prevailing wages. Demand good governance and ongoing oversight to ensure program requirements and project commitments are fulfilled.
- **Demand a fiber-first approach:** Fiber-optic technology must be the standard for broadband deployment. Federal funding should not support inferior technologies, such as low-earth satellite and fixed wireless.
- **Leverage state support:** Take advantage of bipartisan state-level support for broadband funding to ensure projects are performed by high-road union employers.
- **Actively address skepticism around BEAD:** Respond to concerns raised by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) about the BEAD program to ensure continued federal support and accountability.

### TALKING POINTS

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

Broadband expansion 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 needs 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 creating opportunities for employment and connection.”**

Reliable broadband prevents economic stagnation in rural and other underserved areas, fostering business development and connecting communities to 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 reliable and cost-effective broadband solutions, with alternative technologies used only when necessary.