



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.



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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, 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.



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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.



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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 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.



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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.