



January
2026

IBEW POLICY BRIEF

Federal Workers

IBEW's skilled federal workforce is essential to public safety and the nation's defense. These are electricians, line workers, and electronics technicians whose expertise keeps critical federal facilities operating safely and reliably. They maintain dry docks and electrical systems at naval shipyards, support weapons and readiness installations, keep power flowing to military bases and our communities, repair communications infrastructure, and ensure that federal dams, locks, and powerhouses remain active and secure.

Their work at naval shipyards like Portsmouth, Norfolk, Puget Sound, and Pearl Harbor, as well as at Coast Guard yards, depots, and major federal installations, is central to military readiness. IBEW members ensure submarines and surface ships meet deployment timelines, safeguard electrical systems that protect service members, and respond to urgent maintenance needs that keep federal operations running.

Despite their indispensable role, these federal workers are facing escalating threats from those in power hoping to weaken job protections, limit union rights, and insert politics into how the federal workforce functions.

PRIORITIES

- **Demand the federal government uphold longstanding commitments to its employees:** At complex industrial workplaces, shipyards, powerhouses, and weapons facilities, unions are essential to negotiating safe staffing levels, safety protocols, training requirements, and over-time rules. Recent executive orders and other agency actions, however, have sought to eliminate collective bargaining rights and official time for union representatives. Weakening these rights directly affects safety, quality, and mission readiness.
- **Block any attempt to weaken due-process protections:** Curbing appeal rights or limiting access to independent review bodies like the Merit Systems Protection Board is dangerous for highly skilled workers in hazardous environments. These protections guard against retaliation for reporting safety issues or refusing dangerous work. Removing them discourages whistleblowers and puts federal operations at risk.
- **Defend skilled workers from being eliminated because of arbitrary budget decisions:** Reducing investment in workers jeopardizes federal operations, making it harder for shipyards and other critical facilities to recruit and retain the electricians and technicians necessary to meet mission demands and address attrition and skill shortages.

TALKING POINTS

"Federal facilities operate safely and effectively when experienced workers are protected from political interference."

Agencies maintain consistent safety protocols when decisions are driven by expertise, not political agendas.

“The IBEW and all unions play an essential role in maintaining safety standards in hazardous federal workplaces.”

Collective bargaining agreements ensure workers have training, input on safety protocols, and the equipment necessary to prevent incidents.

“Retention of skilled workers is critical to military readiness and public safety.”

The loss of skilled electricians causes delays in repairs, increases hazards, and creates operational gaps that take decades to rebuild.

“Restoring collective bargaining rights for federal employees is critical.”

Collective bargaining rights give workers the certainty that they need to perform their jobs without fear and guarantee the reliability of essential federal 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.