



# Building America Back Better Biden's Agenda is Working for the IBEW

*How President Biden's actions benefit working families and IBEW members*

## WITNESSING HISTORY: IBEW MEMBERS AT WHITE HOUSE FOR INFRASTRUCTURE BILL SIGNING

With the stroke of the pen, alongside more than 10 IBEW members and a bipartisan group of lawmakers at the White House on Nov. 15, President Biden made official one of the biggest infrastructure investments in U.S. history.

Its size and scope ensures that it will rebuild both the country's weakened infrastructure and the middle class. Touching nearly every sector of the U.S. economy, the bill was touted on a level comparable to the construction of the transcontinental railroad in the late 19th century and the interstate highway system in the 1950s.

"I could not be more proud of IBEW members who have long called for transformative investments in infrastructure, and are now ready to get to work rebuilding this country," said IBEW President Lonnie Stephenson. "The long-overdue upgrade America has been waiting for has finally arrived."

Other IBEW members present at the White House ceremony included:

- Baltimore, Md., Local 24 members Balfour (Rico) Albacarys, Jerome Miller and Danielle Buchanan
- Washington, D.C., Local 26 members Juan Bonilla and Mike Pontello
- Washington, D.C., Local 70 members James Horton, Roland Carter and Michael Powers
- Washington, D.C., Local 362 Local Chairman Ansylem Bartholomew
- Washington, D.C., Local 1900 members Albert Scott and Dominic Coleman

Washington, D.C. Local 70 member Michael Powers said they envision "big things" for the outside local in the next few years, like a sizeable membership increase and a new training center down the road.

"This bill will lead to doubling the capacity of the grid in the next 10 years," Powers said. "We are very excited about the opportunities and happy with the Biden administration's prospects for unions and his support."

### Historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation Passes

Biden's signature on the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act came after months of political wrangling, finally clearing the House in early November.

The law contains core investments in IBEW branches, including:

- \$110 billion for roads, bridges and other major projects
- \$73 billion for electricity grid updates
- \$66 billion for passenger and freight rail



*IBEW President Lonnie Stephenson and Austin Keyser, assistant to the president for government affairs, were on the lawn of the White House on Nov. 15 when President Biden signed the infrastructure bill.*



- \$65 billion for broadband internet expansion
- \$50 billion for climate resiliency
- \$39 billion for public transit
- \$17 billion for ports and waterways
- \$11 billion for transportation safety projects
- \$7.5 billion for low emissions buses and ferries
- \$7.5 billion to build electric vehicle charging stations

### IBEW Lobbying Effort Hours before House Vote

Passage by the House of Representatives came only hours after the IBEW launched a lobbying effort involving hundreds of IBEW members working the phones in an all-out push for a vote on the infrastructure legislation that ultimately passed both chambers with bipartisan support.

First, President Stephenson convened a call on Nov. 1 with more than 500 IBEW members to urge them to press their members of Congress to support the package.

“Congress must seize this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” President Stephenson told the IBEW members. “I know IBEW members are ready, willing and able to roll up our sleeves and get to work. But we cannot rebuild America on our own. We need elected leaders to understand the urgency of this moment. We need them to take action immediately.”

President Stephenson said it is past time for investment in America’s foundation.

“This is our chance for robust, transformative, job-creating investments in infrastructure,” he said. “Let’s show our elected leaders the power of IBEW strength and solidarity.”

Wilkes-Barre, Pa., Local 163 President Raymond Sipple called three members of Congress who represent areas in the local’s jurisdiction. He said Local 163 members will likely win utility substation work as part of grid upgrades as well as construction work from industrial development resulting from the bill’s road and bridge improvements.

“Pennsylvania’s roads are atrocious,” Sipple said.

### Winning Passage of the Build Back Better Act

Relief for middle class families is one step closer with the passage by the House of Representatives of the Build Back Better Act on Nov. 19.

Like the infrastructure bill, the Build Back Better Act will make transformative investments in future generations, the health care system and public schools.

“For generations, IBEW members have joined our working sisters and brothers across the economy in calling for the kind of basic protections and services found in the Build Back Better Act,” President Stephenson said. “This historic legislation will improve quality of life for millions, and today, IBEW members are celebrating its passage by the U.S. House of Representatives.”

The nearly \$2 trillion bill also includes \$555 billion for clean energy tax credits and climate funding, expanded Affordable Care Act tax credits, and caps on childcare and out-of-pocket prescription drug costs. In addition, the bill sets aside \$20 billion for workforce development activities, including \$6 billion in funding to expand apprenticeship programs over the next five years.

President Stephenson said the IBEW looks forward to working with lawmakers in the Senate to enhance the legislation by including provisions to retain jobs for existing workers in communities that depend on the energy industry for economic survival.



“Restoring the middle class has always been at the heart of President Biden’s ambitious plan to Build Back Better, and the IBEW is proud to stand with President Biden, Vice President Harris, and Congress in fighting for the union workers who built the middle class and who continue to power our nation,” Stephenson said.

The Build Back Better Act, recognized by the term “budget reconciliation,” now heads to the Senate, where it is likely to evolve. If it changes, the House will have to vote on it again before it can be signed by President Biden. IBEW Government Affairs staff is monitoring its progress.

## BOOSTING THE POWER OF THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE; HOPING IT’S CONTAGIOUS

In a welcome reversal from past administrations’ attempts to stifle the power of unions in the federal sector, the [Biden administration](#) is actively encouraging more worker participation in collective bargaining.

“We are proud as the Biden Harris administration in what we believe we will be, which is the most pro-union administration in the history of America,” Vice President Kamala Harris said on Oct. 20 announcing the new guidelines. Among them are:

- Including bargaining unit status and union affiliation in job announcements
- Giving unions the opportunity to share information with new employees about their right to join
- Directing agencies to issue periodic notices throughout the year on workers’ right to representation

Approximately 1.2 million non-postal government workers are union members, which is 33 percent of the eligible group. The IBEW is among 20 unions that represent 300,000 federal workers under the Federal Workers Alliance.

The directives are part of a larger effort, the White House Task Force on Worker Organizing and Empowerment, chaired by Harris, to produce a report on how to address barriers to organizing.

## ‘HE’S SCRANTON’: IBEW MEMBER MEETS PRESIDENT BIDEN IN CHILDHOOD HOMETOWN

President Biden appeared at the [Electric City Trolley Museum](#) in Scranton on October 20 to promote his domestic agenda and the hundreds of thousands of jobs that will be created to rebuild the nation’s degraded infrastructure.

There to meet him backstage was Scranton Local 81 Business Manager Mike McDermott.

The industrial city in northeastern Pennsylvania known most recently as the setting of the fictional Dunder Mifflin in “The Office,” Biden grew up there. Known as “Scranton Joe,” Biden strongly identifies with the town and its working class values. He is that guy, McDermott said.



“He was witty, down to earth ... it was like talking to a guy you’ve known 100 years,” McDermott said. “He definitely has that Scranton personality. I don’t care how long he lived in Delaware. He’s Scranton.”

They chatted about the important role the IBEW played to his campaign, endorsing Biden in February 2020, weeks before he would go on to clinch the Democratic nomination. “He was very appreciative of us and spoke very highly of Lonnie [Stephenson]. We discussed how much work the infrastructure bill would bring IBEW members.”

At the close of their conversation, McDermott said President Biden presented him with a two-inch diameter gold presidential medallion. “To my knowledge nobody else got one there that day,” McDermott said.

Scranton Local 81 Business Manager Mike McDermott met President Biden when he visited the city in October.



## APPOINTING FORMER MINE WORKERS OFFICIAL AS OSHA HEAD

After nearly five years without a confirmed leader, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration is headed by [worker safety advocate](#) Doug Parker.

“Finally after 1,747 days, @OSHA has a champion for workers right as its director,” said AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler. “Doug Parker will advocate for safe working conditions for all and hold employers who violate workers’ right accountable.”

Parker, who headed California’s division of occupational safety and health for the past two years, is likely to increase the agency’s inspectors and enforce its anti-retaliation rule. One-time staff attorney for the United Mine Workers, Parker served as senior advisor to President Obama at the Mine Safety and Health Administration.

## GIVING PRO-WORKER APPOINTEES A VOICE ON FEDERAL LABOR BOARD

Continuing a trend of filling labor-related posts with experienced [pro-worker nominees](#), President Biden has selected Susan Tsui Grundmann and Kurt Rumsfeld for seats on the Federal Labor Relations Authority.

“Federal workers can breathe a little easier now that President Biden has not only filled these vacancies, but has done so with experienced individuals who understand the importance of the work that our federal workforce does,” said Government Employees Director Paul O’Connor.

The FLRA oversees disputes between federal agencies and their employee unions. If confirmed by the Senate, Grundmann would serve as a member of the board and Rumsfeld would serve as general counsel.

Grundmann currently serves as the executive director and chief operating officer of the Office of Congressional Workplace Rights, where she oversees the administrative dispute resolution process and provides education to both employing offices and labor unions that represent employees in the legislative branch. Prior to that post, she was general counsel to the National Federation of Federal Employees.

Rumsfeld, who began his career with the Department of Labor, is currently the chief counsel to Ernie DuBester, chairman of the FLRA. Rumsfeld previously served as assistant general counsel

for operations and legal policy for the FLRA’s Office of General Counsel, where he assisted in managing regional operations.

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*IBEW members like this employee of the Army Corps of Engineers will benefit from pro-worker nominees on the Federal Labor Relations Authority.*

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