



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

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

## DELIVERING ON THE INFRASTRUCTURE PROMISE

Modernizing the electric grid. Decarbonizing transportation. Investing in the future. Good job opportunities for Americans. All are moving forward with the passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the largest infrastructure law in generations – and with it jobs for IBEW members in nearly every branch.



*The massive infrastructure law signed late last year contains billions of dollars to increase the capacity of the grid, upgrade freight and passenger rail and construct a comprehensive national EV charging network.*

On [Facebook Live](#), President Stephenson and U.S. Rep. Cheri Bustos, who represents President Stephenson's hometown of Rock Island, Ill., recently discussed the bright future of the nation's infrastructure – and the union workforce that the bill will put to work.

President Stephenson told the audience that the bill invests \$149 million in the state of Illinois to build out the electric vehicle charging network. "It's a priority of the IBEW that this work is done with national standards," Stephenson said. "It's essential that people installing these charging stations are properly trained."

"When I think about the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, I think 'electric,'" Bustos said.

The massive infrastructure law signed in November contains billions of dollars to increase the capacity of the electrical grid, build out the broadband network, construct a

comprehensive national electric vehicle charging network and upgrade the passenger and freight rail system.

[Click here](#) to read an in-depth Electrical Worker story about the new infrastructure law.

### Raising Hopes for a Long-Sought Infrastructure Project in N.H.

For two decades, New Hampshire officials have lamented the lack of a commuter rail option to draw tourists and workers to the Granite State. Without it, robust economic development efforts across the state could fall short.

But the passage of the infrastructure law has renewed hope, delivered by U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg.

"An easy commute from the Boston metro area would help our travel and tourism and retail – but funding has always been the issue," said IBEW International Representative Joe Casey, who met with Buttigieg when he visited Dec. 13 to discuss the commuter rail project linking Boston to Nashua and Manchester, N.H.



*The new infrastructure law could help bring commuter rail from Boston to New Hampshire, transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg (left) told the IBEW's Joe Casey.*



Casey said it is possible that earmarked commuter rail funding in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act signed by President Biden late last year could be deployed.

“Secretary Buttigieg was progressive about spending this money to bring our means of travel into the 21st century, which will improve our economy and competitiveness,” said Casey, who joined the state’s congressional delegation, local mayors and small business owners for the event.

Buttigieg also assured Casey, who was the only representative of labor [at the gathering](#), that the project would be performed by local workers earning area standards and benefits.

“For years, the residents of Manchester and the business community have been advocating for rail,” said Manchester Mayor Joyce Craig. “Now with the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act it really feels like we have the momentum and opportunity to make this real and it’s so exciting.”

[Click here](#) for a state-by-state breakdown of how the infrastructure law will deliver for your community.

### Seeking Input into the Law’s Rollout

The IBEW is providing key input into the federal government’s implementation of the infrastructure law by submitting comments to the U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration on how the electric vehicle charging infrastructure is built and deployed.

Through its participation in the rule-making process, the IBEW hopes to persuade officials to adopt a standardized national training program for EV infrastructure installation, the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Training Program.



The IBEW is providing input into the rules governing the EV charging buildup.

“By requiring EVITP certification, the Agencies can avoid the expected consequences of substandard electrical work, including the ramifications of improper EVSE installation, which can be catastrophic,” the IBEW wrote in comments submitted to the Transportation Department. “The risks associated with the lack of best practice standards within the industry can be mitigated by requiring these investments to be made through the deployment of a qualified workforce. EVITP certification will ensure that a qualified American workforce will perform this work, and that the jobs created are safe, good-paying, family-sustaining jobs.”

The group will give IBEW members the opportunity to contribute suggestions about workforce safety, wages and benefits. The IBEW is also participating in a working group charged with developing workforce needs in the telecommunications sector.

## PUBLISHING A ROADMAP OF INFRASTRUCTURE OPPORTUNITIES

Just in time for the flow of resources to fulfill the promises of the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act signed on Nov. 15, the White House is amplifying how to capitalize on the historic funding opportunities.

Each project in the largest ever investment in transit, broadband rail and clean energy will come through state, local and tribal governments. [This guidebook](#) supplies government leaders with application details, key dates and explanations of available funding for particular programs. A companion site on [Build.gov](#) is a searchable database of programs. Both will be updated to reflect changes and new information.





## MAKING PROMISES, AND KEEPING THEM

On the campaign trail and throughout his presidency, Joe Biden has promised to be the most pro-union, pro-worker president in history. As President Biden celebrates his first year in office, his actions are matching his words.

“President Biden has taken significant and historic steps to promote, protect, and enhance the rights of working people, including IBEW members,” [President Stephenson said](#) in a statement citing a long list of first-year accomplishments:

1. Appointing a union member to lead the Department of Labor
2. Creating the first-ever White House Task Force on Worker Organizing and Empowerment
3. Ordering the federal government to spend taxpayer dollars on goods made by American workers
4. Signing dozens of executive orders that promote worker-friendly policies, including those that create good jobs in the energy sector
5. Signing into law the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan, giving working families the financial support they needed to make it through the pandemic
6. Championing and signing the Butch Lewis Emergency Pension Plan Relief Act, saving pensions for millions and ensuring a retirement with dignity

“And he signed into law the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the single largest investment in infrastructure in American history. This once-in-a-generation investment will put millions to work in good, union jobs modernizing the electric grid, repairing and expanding the vital transportation services Americans rely on, and creating the reduced-carbon energy solutions that will power our economy well into the 21st century and beyond.

“On behalf of the IBEW’s 775,000 active and retired members, I applaud President Biden on these achievements and thank him for prioritizing the needs of working families,” President Stephenson said.

## RECOMMENDING EVITP IN EV CHARGING BUILDOUT

In [guidance released](#) on Feb. 10, the Federal Highway Administration suggested the use of the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Training Program (EVITP) in its implementation of the electric vehicle charging infrastructure buildout.

The 30-page memo is a result of the recently enacted bipartisan infrastructure law, which includes the goal of putting the United States on the path to a nationwide network of 500,000 electric vehicle chargers by 2030. At an announcement event in Washington, D.C. with Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm, speakers affirmed [the key role that IBEW](#) members will play in their construction.

“The IBEW’s 775,000 members have long called for a highly-skilled, highly trained workforce to be at the forefront of electric vehicle charging infrastructure installation and maintenance,” [President Stephenson said](#). “We are pleased that the guidance issued today by the Department of Transportation sets the foundation for the development of national standards and recognizes the need for quality training by including EVITP. Through these actions, DOT clearly demonstrates that it is prioritizing the safety of the traveling public and the creation of career pathways for working people.”

Stephenson said in the safe transition from fossil fuel-powered vehicles to electric vehicles, the integrity of the infrastructure must be prioritized.

“With the right federal standards in place, our government can ensure that EV charging stations are installed to the high-quality standards the American public deserves the first time, sparing costly and time-consuming repairs down the road while creating good, union jobs,” he said.



Mitch Landrieu, senior advisor to President Biden for infrastructure coordination, tweeted that the new EV chargers will use American parts. “And they’ll be installed up and down highway corridors across the country by IBEW workers. The benefits will ripple out thousands of miles away. America can lead the world in electric vehicles.”

With the Feb. 10 announcement, the highway administration agreed with the IBEW’s strong recommendation for the EVITP adoption, which was submitted to the agency in January. EVITP was developed with automobile manufacturers, utilities, energy storage device manufacturers, electrical contractors, state and local electrical inspectors and the National Fire Protection Agency to ensure electric vehicle charging equipment is installed to the highest standards of safety, performance and quality.

“By requiring EVITP certification, the Federal Highway Administration can avoid the expected consequences of substandard electrical work, including the ramifications for improper [charging network equipment] installation, which can be catastrophic,” said the IBEW comment document. “Importantly, EVITP training devotes considerable time to properly and accurately performing load calculations, which are essential to avoiding electrical fires and to the responsible deployment and operation of EV charging infrastructure.”

## MANDATING PLAS ON FEDERAL CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

President Biden on Feb. 4 issued an Executive Order requiring project labor agreements (PLAs) on large-scale federal construction projects.

“When big construction projects are completed efficiently and with the highest degree of professionalism, it’s good for the American taxpayer,” [President Biden said](#) at a Maryland event making the announcement. “That’s not hyperbole; that’s a fact.”

PLAs, which have been used for generations, are collective bargaining agreements between building trades unions and contractors. They govern terms and conditions of employment for all craft workers—union and nonunion—on a construction project. They protect taxpayers by eliminating costly delays due to labor conflicts or shortages of skilled workers.

As explained in the White House [fact sheet](#) on the Order, the PLA requirement would help the federal government get the best value for its taxpayer dollars by:

- Alleviating coordination challenges on complex projects
- Raising standards for contractors
- Reducing uncertainty in the contracting process

## UNDERSCORING THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS

President Biden was already slated to visit Pittsburgh on Jan. 28, when a 50-year-old bridge near the speech venue picked that day to give way, collapsing under its weight and injuring several people on it at the time.

Luckily none of the injuries were serious and no one was killed. But the tragedy horrifically emphasized the message of the day: the urgency of accomplishing all of those long-deferred infrastructure projects.

“We saw today, when a bridge is in disrepair, it literally can threaten lives,” [Biden said](#), adding that the bridge “had been rated in poor condition for the past 10 years.”

“There are another 3,300 bridges here in Pennsylvania in just as old, and just as decrepit a condition as that bridge was,” he said. “Across the country, there are 45,000 bridges in poor condition.”





Unfortunately for Pittsburgh Local 5 Business Manager Tom McIntyre and Pittsburgh Local 29 Business Manager Kenn Bradley, Biden’s diversion to the bridge collapse site squeezed the time originally set aside to meet with IBEW leaders invited to convene in a VIP tent near the site. They still got a handshake and a photo, though, McIntyre said.

President Biden is fond of Pittsburgh. He chose the city to announce his candidacy for president, and has visited several times since he was sworn in. Vice President Kamala Harris and Labor Secretary Marty Walsh chose [Local 5’s hall for a meeting](#) last year on increasing worker organizing.

“Chances are good he’ll be back,” McIntyre said. “The Secret Service knows this building better than we do.”

## LEVERAGING THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO GROW UNIONS

A task force created by President Biden in the early days of his administration to promote worker organizing and collective bargaining has produced a report with nearly 70 recommendations.

“The Biden-Harris Administration believes that increasing worker organizing and empowerment is critical to growing the middle class, building an economy that puts workers first, and strengthening our democracy,” the report says.

The [46-page report](#) outlines federal policies, practices and programs to promote the Biden administration’s policy of support for worker power. It also connects the relatively low percentage of unionized workers in the private sector (6.1 percent) with their popularity. Nearly 1 in 2 workers say in polls they would join a union if they had a chance.

“By recognizing and uplifting the role labor unions play in improving the lives of working people, the Biden-Harris administration is once again leading by example and delivering victories for working people,” [said IBEW President Lonnie Stephenson](#) in a Feb. 7 statement.

Today, worker power is rising, as employers are paying more amid the pandemic-fueled worker shortage. While the administration recommends facilitating union growth in the federal sector, providing federal workers with more information about unions to new workers and informing them about their collective bargaining rights, more could be done with legislation.

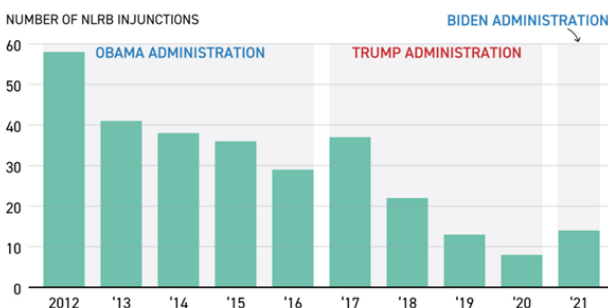
“The recommendations in this report represent a significant milestone for working people across America, but more must be done to secure workers’ rights to form and join unions. Congress must pass the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act to ensure every worker who wants to join a union may do so freely and fairly,” Stephenson said.

## ADDING CHOPS TO TOOTHLESS LABOR LAWS

National Labor Relations Board general counsel Jennifer Abruzzo announced an effort to pursue employers in court for engaging in illegal anti-union retaliation.

### NLRB injunctions expected to rise under Biden administration

The number of annual NLRB injunctions declined from 37 to eight during the Trump administration. It rose in 2021 when Biden appointed a Democratic majority.



Source: NLRB

The memorandum [released on Feb. 1](#) seeks injunctions to stop coercion in its tracks – before ongoing employer harassment has the potential to intimidate the entire workforce and stop a nascent organizing effort.

“Threats often escalate into action, imposing even more burdens and chilling effects on employees,” said General Counsel Jennifer Abruzzo. “They are not mere words impacting employees, but a prelude to what is likely to come to pass. Therefore, I believe that threats or other coercive conduct need to be promptly stopped, not only to erase the chilling impact they have on employees, but to prevent escalation of the words into action.”



IBEW President Lonnie Stephenson applauded the move to seek injunctions in federal court.

"Too often, and for far too long, working people exercising their rights to join and form unions have faced illegal threats, harassment, and job loss at the hands of anti-union employers who face little to no real consequences for their behavior," he said. "With this new initiative, the NLRB will harness the power of the federal courts to quickly stop unlawful behavior against workers trying to unionize – before they can be fired."

While her predecessor was fired on Joe Biden's first day in office, [Jennifer Abruzzo](#) had to wait six months for a Senate confirmation. Since then, she has wasted no time carrying out President Biden's pro-union labor policies. A former deputy counsel at the NLRB, she is charged with enforcing the National Labor Relations Act – and ensuring workers' rights are respected.

"We're focused on protecting the rights of workers to engage collectively to improve conditions on the ground," Abruzzo told Bloomberg News.

## ADVOCATING FOR DEMOCRATIC REFORMS WITH NEW SENATE RULES

IBEW President Lonnie Stephenson is rallying members to help protect the country from undemocratic forces in state legislatures and in the U.S. Congress seeking to limit voting rights.

In a call with AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler and U.S. Rep. Hakeem Jeffries (N.Y.) on Jan. 14, he cited efforts in 19 states to restrict voting rights, limit early voting and reduce the number of polling places. Combine these trends with the heavy-handed use of the filibuster – a procedural tool giving the minority party the power to block legislation that comes to the Senate floor – and Stephenson said democracy itself is in danger.

"As union electricians, we understand the fundamental importance of the right to vote," Stephenson said. "IBEW members vote on contracts that impact our work. We vote for the leaders who will represent us in contract negotiations and grievance procedures. And we participate in state and federal elections. That's why all of us should be disheartened by the recent attacks on our democracy."

Particularly alarming, he said, is that these hurdles specifically target working people, voters of color, and voters with disabilities.

Under filibuster rules, 60 percent of the Senate is requested to pass most legislation, thwarting the will of a simple majority in most cases. With the call to action, Stephenson echoed the forceful appeal President Biden made Jan. 11 in Atlanta.

"The right to vote and have that vote count, it is democracy's threshold liberty. Without it, nothing is possible. But with it, anything is possible," Biden said.

Stephenson and Shuler urged members to lobby their members of the Senate to pass voting rights legislation, including the Freedom to Vote Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, which would protect the right of every American to cast their vote and have that vote counted.

"It is dire; it is urgent," Shuler told the nearly 400 IBEW members on the call – We are putting out an SOS right now on voting rights. Nothing is more fundamental than the ability to express ourselves through our vote."

Jeffries, chairman of the House Democratic Caucus, said there would be no better way to honor the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. than to pass voting rights legislation. "It's so important at moments like this for organized labor to step up and make our voices heard," he said.

The AFL-CIO's "Sideline the Filibuster" effort allows participants to sign a petition, make a video, share a social media graphic and more. Members can access these actions through the [IBEWaction.org](https://www.ibewaction.org) site.



## PLEDGING PRO-WORKER APPROACH TO TRADE, FOREIGN POLICY

At a roundtable with union leaders, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken pledged that new trade pacts and related foreign policy will help American workers.

“Our domestic competitiveness, our national security, and a thriving middle class are mutually reinforcing,” [Blinken said](#). “We want to make sure that we’re engaged in an innovation economy that delivers for workers across the country.”



*At Pittsburgh Local 5, Secretary of State Antony Blinken holds an unprecedented roundtable with union leaders, pledging that new trade pacts will help American workers.*

He spoke with a group that included now-retired Pittsburgh Local 5 Business Manager Mike Dunleavy and representatives from the Steelworkers, Teamsters, United Food and Commercial Workers, Communications Workers of America, Service Employees International, the Allegheny-Fayette Central Labor Council and Pennsylvania AFL-CIO.

Blinken arrived at Local 5’s sprawling hall and training center after a day and a half of international meetings in Pittsburgh with the administration’s newly created Trade and Technology Council.

“The issues we’re taking on through this council are critical to our economy, to our competitiveness, and to our workers’ livelihoods, now and well into the future,” he said. “We believe strongly—the president believes strongly—that labor groups have to be our partner in policy, that includes foreign policy.”

Dunleavy met last year with Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm, and last June [his local hosted Vice President Harris and Labor Secretary Marty Walsh for a roundtable](#) with a cross section of union organizers.

“With this administration, the outreach to labor is like nothing I’ve ever seen,” Dunleavy said.

Check out the [IBEW Media Center](#) for more on this story.

## ACTING TO MOVE SPENT NUCLEAR FUEL TO PERMANENT LOCATIONS

The Biden administration is taking [a new approach](#) to the tons of spent nuclear fuel temporarily housed at nuclear plants across the country.

The Department of Energy has announced a search for willing communities to store the nuclear waste after abandoning the decades-long effort to designate Nevada’s Yucca Mountain as a repository following local opposition.

“Hearing from and then working with communities interested in hosting one of these facilities is the best way to finally solve the nation’s spent nuclear fuel management issues,” Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm said in a statement. “We know there are real benefits from jobs to new infrastructure that will drive interest in areas across the country. The public’s input is central to identifying those locations to make this process as inclusive and effective as possible.”

The United States has accumulated about 83,000 metric tons of radioactive nuclear waste since the 1950s, which is now stored in steel and concrete enclosures at 76 reactor sites in 34 states, according to the DOE.



"Nuclear energy is essential to achieving the Administration's goals to create a carbon pollution-free power sector by 2035 and net zero emissions economy by 2050," the Department of Energy said in a press release announcing the effort. "Managing waste not only makes nuclear a more sustainable option but also helps fulfill DOE's obligation to manage the nation's spent nuclear fuel."

## ASSISTING COAL AND POWER PLANT COMMUNITIES

As part of the Biden administration's ongoing commitment to energy workers, an [online system](#) has been launched to match \$45 billion in investment opportunities with local economic revitalization programs.

The site was announced in a Dec. 13 discussion with administration officials, stakeholders, labor union members and representatives from private companies. They discussed how to repurpose existing assets like coal-fired plants to service new industries and technologies to preserve jobs and reposition assets as economic development tools. Including AFL-CIO and United Mine Workers members, the participants reaffirmed labor unions as a key partner to support worker training.

The [online clearinghouse](#) is a resource to sort and filter opportunities based on funding type, program and eligibility.

## ORDERING THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO GO GREEN

President Biden signed an [executive order](#) requiring the federal government to reduce emissions from its buildings, vehicles and operations.

With it, the administration seeks to transform how the government builds, purchases and operates while supporting the growth of the domestic clean energy and clean technology industries.

President Lonnie Stephenson cheered the Dec. 8 announcement.

"The IBEW applauds President Biden's ambitious plan to put the federal government on the road to sustainability. By ensuring union workers are front and center in its efforts to reduce carbon emissions and modernize our nation's infrastructure, today's executive order proves that it is possible to achieve climate goals while supporting the needs of working families. The 775,000 members of the IBEW stand ready to work with the federal government in its transition to zero-emissions vehicles, zero-emissions buildings, and a cleaner future for our country."



*President Biden ordered the federal government to reduce carbon emissions.*



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