



IBEW 46-NECA talks heat up as May 31 deadline approaches

‘Farther apart than we should be’ on multiple issues, including quality-of-life, support for sanitation and safety

KENT, Wash. (May 20, 2021) — With the May 31 contract expiration date fast approaching, negotiations are heating up between the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 46 and the Puget Sound Chapter of the National Electrical Contractors Association on a new Master Construction contract agreement that affects all of the union’s more than 6,000 members in King, Kitsap, Jefferson and Clallam counties.

With the deadline less than two

weeks away, the two sides are “farther apart than we should be at this time,” said Sean Bagsby, Business Manager / Financial Secretary for IBEW 46.

Earlier in negotiations, IBEW 46 had made it clear that the union wasn’t looking for a fight, just a fair contract that shows respect for these are highly skilled workers. These professionally trained Inside Wire essential workers perform commercial and industrial electrical work, and many of them have graduated from 4- or 5-year state-rec-

ognized and accredited apprenticeship programs.

“Quality-of-life issues are very important to this essential workforce, especially as we come out of this pandemic,” Bagsby said. “Workers have a renewed appreciation of time with family, and security of income during the holidays, and they want their contract to reflect that.”

IBEW 46 also wants to make sure

(See next page)

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the contract makes progress on diversity, equity and inclusion by having gender-neutral and non-discrimination language.

“Our workforce reflects the communities they come from and so does the electrical industry,” Bagsby said. “The membership of IBEW 46 have made it clear that they want to see themselves in the construction agreement. They want the diverse communities they live in and recruit from to be reflected in the contract.”

Though there are several classifications of IBEW members with negotiations in process, the biggest single agreement is for 4,200 inside Wire Members. These are the essential workers who specialize in connecting their commercial customers’ electrical systems to the outside power source, and then distributing that power throughout the facility. It’s demanding, technical work that requires years of training, certification, proficiency and attention to detail — for the safety of all the buildings’ occupants and for the electricians themselves.

In addition, there are several other IBEW 46 construction units in negotiations. These groups include more than 140 Residential Electricians, over 130 Construction Stock people, and Lighting Fixture maintenance workers. These hardworking electrical workers



and support crews are vital to the many construction and tenant improvement projects you see and drive by every day.

This IBEW 46 workforce is part of the current and future green economy. They perform energy conservation building upgrades, install electric vehicle charging station infrastructure, light rail, and solar photovoltaics. They — and the companies they work for — are ready to go to work to “Build Back Better” under President Joe Biden’s \$2 trillion American Jobs Plan.

As the clock ticks toward the May 31 deadline, the union says it will continue to negotiate in good faith for a contract worthy of these essential workers. Until then, IBEW 46 is thankful for the support it has already received from the labor community.

“Since these negotiations began, we’ve received great messages of solidarity from throughout the building trades and the labor community,” Bagsby said. “It’s nice to know our Union siblings have our backs as we work to achieve a fair contract.”

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