



IBEW 46 members vote to authorize strike

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With contract's expiration, union delivers 10-day strike notice to NECA

KENT, Wash. (June 2, 2021) — Last week, members of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 46 turned out in record numbers and voted to authorize a strike against the Puget Sound Chapter of the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA). On Monday, May 31, with the expiration of its Master Construction agreements affecting more than 6,000 IBEW 46 members in King, Kitsap, Jefferson and Clallam counties, the union delivered a 10-day strike notice to NECA.

Although negotiations continue, the two sides are reportedly far apart. If an agreement is not reached by June 11, there could be a strike that would create a major disruption on construction projects throughout King County and the Olympic Peninsula. IBEW 46 has already received strike sanction from MLK Labor, the AFL-CIO central labor council for King County, and strike sanction requests are pending at other area labor federations and building and construction trades councils.



In what was a record turnout for an IBEW 46 strike authorization vote last Thursday, members voted by a more than 94 percent to approve a strike, which could begin as soon as June 11 if negotiators can't reach an agreement.

“No one wants a strike, but these highly skilled electrical workers are frustrated that NECA is not offering a contract proposal that values and respects their essential work,” said Sean Bagsby, Business Manager / Financial Secretary for IBEW 46. “Our members are running out of patience. We will continue to bargain in good faith in the days ahead, but we need to see some movement from NECA. Time is running out.”

The key unresolved issues important to members include improved safety provisions and PPE on the job, expanded parking / transportation premium, overall economics, and paid time off / quality-of-life, which in this era of COVID has become more important than ever. IBEW 46 also wants to make sure the contract makes progress on diversity, equity and inclusion by having gender-neutral and non-discrimination language.

“It is frustrating to hear NECA say they ‘aren’t here to make history’ when it comes to non-discrimination language and quality of life proposals,” said IBEW 46 member TW (names are being withheld to avoid employer retaliation).



Although 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.

Early on 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 highly skilled workers.

"The process has been slow and frustrating," said IBEW 46 member ND. "Proposed changes we thought would gain traction and support from both sides were either immediately shot down, or the road to mutual agreement is as frustrating as bathing a cat!"

Stay tuned to The Stand for developments.