

## **9<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT PROGRESS MEETING**

I was fortunate enough to attend the IBEW 9<sup>TH</sup> District Progress meeting this past month in Portland, Oregon. I was part of our District's Veteran Delegation and was part of a day long presentation on how unions can recruit, retain and most importantly, support our union siblings who have served. For those who do not know, less than 6 % of the American populace has ever sworn to defend and protect your liberties. You work with them every day and don't even know unless you directly ask if they were in the armed forces. Veterans are that quiet team member, always ready and vigilant. However, when it comes time to ask for help, too many still do not know where to turn, or have a fear of being stigmatized by asking for help. Add this to the fact that they are coming into a high suicide rate industry, and many get tainted with the wrongly held viewpoint of PTSD (EVEN IF THEY ARE NOT diagnosed).

This is why we need to make sure to implement our Veteran Committees within EVERY local in the United States and Canada! Even then, we will not have a REAL number of those within our ranks. Veterans are one of the toughest groups to identify and it doesn't help that the only way we can learn their status is through self-attestation. Recently the IBEW has developed and made available coins for veterans and as of this writing we have only seen around 23,000 delivered? With a 900,000-member populace, that number should be easily doubled!! Please, if you are a veteran let us know so we can begin to identify how your union can best serve you and your brothers and sisters. We discussed many things during our daylong workshop, from access to records to begin a VA claim, to loans, to small business opportunities, and resources you have served, and are entitled to your benefit. It is NOT a "handout", it is what is owed to you on behalf of your service. Never feel that you would be taking away from someone else by making sure that you are being taken care of. There is plenty of capacity to do this good work!

Tuesday and Wednesday were sessions as well and we heard from some of our District trainers around Leadership, Education, and Planning for Organizing (LEAP), as well as hearing at the opening plenary on Wednesday from Governor Kotek (OR). She is a strong labor advocate and is in IBEW's corner when it comes to our future grid demands and clean energy projects. With the current state of affairs with the "other" Washington she promised to remain steadfast in support of our work! The MODA Center in Portland will undergo an upgrade worth about \$600 to 700 million dollars and will be done under a Project Labor Agreement! She closed by stating that we must remain grounded in our values. As leaders this is essential. Remember that we not only fight for ourselves and our members, but for the community that will be impacted by our good work as well, we are all one!

IVP Dave Reaves spoke about mental health, and the increasing strain that members and their families are facing, given the work picture in many local jurisdictions, and he also stated that our goal for growth in the 9<sup>th</sup> District for 2026 is to hit our benchmark target of 167,000 active members!! Much emphasis was given to the Clean Technology Training Trust, and to the Clean Tech Working Group (AI focused).

International President Kenneth Cooper spoke about how important it is that we all stay engaged in the fights that matter. As always, he took time to ask everyone in attendance to remember their own “home team”, the families that support us all in our work! He referenced the pension reform work that we were able to be instrumental in years ago, and introduced our sister Liz Schuler (IBEW MEMBER), who is the head of the AFL-CIO!!

Sister Schuler took time to make it clear that with the advent of and demand for AI, that IBEW is the single largest union that will be impacted, as this sector continues to grow, and that we need to be ready. Storms pass, but union power lasts!!

Briefings were given around local union elections processes. Many locals within the District will be selecting their leadership this year. The District had a guest speaker, Josh Rizzo, former Army Ranger and West Point graduate. He spoke to the importance of leaders being trained in the art of listening and observation. These are the most effective tools for us to engage and be able to assess mental health, either as a recipient or as a helper for someone else (“Do someone the honor of allowing them to be there for you, for you to be heard...”). His phrase was that we do the Heart Work Behind the Hard Work.

I have much more information in my notes. If you would like a copy of my notes, feel free to reach out to me - [keith@ibew46.com](mailto:keith@ibew46.com).

Thank you for all you do every day in representing our locals fine craftsmanship and professionalism. You all make our clients decision to “go union” easy, when they know they can expect a quality job, done right and delivered on time!!!

In Solidarity,

Keith J Weir  
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