

9th District Progress Meeting

I was honored to attend a 9th District Progress Meeting for the first time. To kick things off, I participated in the clean-up of Holladay Park as a part of the Day of Service, a tradition of the EWMC that's been adopted by the IBEW. It felt great to serve our host city with my union siblings.

In the EWMC Caucus meeting, Leroy Chincio, Business Manager of IBEW 1260 and IEC member, said the diversity of his local brings strength. And a brother whose name I didn't catch said that billionaires are the only threatening minority!

In the Women's Committee Meeting, I learned that Diane Limon of IBEW 11 is working to structure Women's Committees in the IBEW along the lines of Veterans Affairs, with representatives from each state. There's an open call for state rep candidates.

In the RENEW Caucus Meeting, we heard from IBEW 357 Director of Government Affairs, Ronnie Young. He spoke about kicking off new RENEW Caucuses.

In the Welcome Reception, we heard from speakers including Oregon Governor Tina Kotek, AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler, and International President Kenneth Cooper. Dave Reaves said we must resource organizing like we really mean it, and that the storms we navigate today are not permanent, but the decisions we make will be. Liz Schuler said people have lost faith in institutions, from government to the media and beyond, but they still believe in organized labor. Jon Newman, IBEW General Council, gave a presentation on IBEW elections.

In the General Session, Army Veteran Josh Rizzo gave a presentation about mental health. He talked about his own struggles and shared mental health first aid best practices. Josh cited findings of a Harvard study, saying chronic loneliness is a health risk equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day. He said true leaders try to be interested, not interesting.

I attended the Leadership, Education, and Planning (LEAP) Training. We talked about union density, current events in politics (including the threat of national "Right To Work" and the proposed NIOSHA Act, which would abolish OSHA) and volunteerism in our unions.

In the Inside Construction Workshop, we got some jurisdictional and policy updates and had a meet and greet with the new Education Department Reps, Serena Green and Laquania "Que" Thompson. 9th District Government Affairs Rep Gretchen Newsom gave us a political update. We heard about the new 9th District Organizing Policy and discussed unfunded market recovery strategies.

Jon Newman returned to give a brief history lesson on the consequences of elections. He cited the 1946 midterms culminating in the 1947 Taft Hartley Act, the 2010 midterms culminating in Indiana and Michigan becoming “Right To Work” states, and the 2014 midterms in which Democrats lost their majority in the sane, which led to Mitch McConnell becoming the senate majority leader, which enabled him to block Merrick Garland’s 2016 supreme court nomination because Barack Obama would be up for reelection in 8 months, resulting in Neil Gorsuch’s supreme court confirmation. A year and a half later, the supreme court ruled 5-4 against AFSCME in the Janus Decision, a historic blow to public sector unions. In 2020, Mitch McConnell also reversed his logic of 2016 and led the senate to confirm Amy Coney Barrett to the supreme court when Donald Trump was up for reelection, about a week before election day. Because of poor turnout in the 2014 midterm elections, unions must *avoid* cases going to the supreme court in 2026! Elections have consequences.

To close the session, there was a presentation about time management and a panel of organizers talking about top-down organizing campaigns.

I also repeated the PAL Training with Gretchen Newsom, a deep dive into the IBEW’s involvement with politics. We explored why it’s important to run IBEW members for local offices, and why every election, no matter how small, is critical for securing work for the IBEW.

I was inspired by what I learned, and I’ve set to work applying the lessons! As always, I’m grateful to be reminded that we’re part of something much bigger than ourselves, and that in organized labor, we’re never alone.

Solidarity Forever!

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