Dear Sisters and Brothers,

It’s with a great deal of hope for improvement in our personal and professional lives that we enter each New Year. While our hope for better employment opportunities over the last several years here in the North Bay has been tested, thankfully we have seen other regions of the Bay Area steadily creating jobs and leading the state out of the great recession. We question when the recovery is going to extend to us. Today we see encouraging signs of the economic recovery right here at home, which I believe will improve employment opportunities for our membership over the next several years. One of the most promising indicators shows an increase in consumer confidence and when seventy percent of our economy is consumer driven that helps drive the recovery. In other words, when we start buying products and services it gives private sector business the confidence to open their checkbooks and expand their operations resulting in more construction jobs.

We have worked hard to position ourselves to take full advantage of the jobs that this new economy will be creating in the construction industry. The first large private sector project that we will see coming out of the ground this year will be at Marin General Hospital (MGH). A great deal of effort went into securing a PLA for this work and now the fruits of our labor will be realized when the project breaks ground on a three year capital improvement program. The plans for MGH include a four-story, 260,000 square-foot hospital replacement building; a five story, 100,000 square-foot ambulatory services building; and two parking structures. Once this work is completed MGH has plans to completely remodel the existing hospital.

I’m confident that the relationship we have developed with the MGH board of directors, plus the value our highly skilled local union workforce brings to our community, will go a long way to assure that union contractors perform the remodel work. None of this would have happened had we not worked with the MGH for the passage of Measure R. We donated money, walked precincts and staffed phone banks in order to achieve the required two-thirds voter approval on the bond measure. This winning effort was only possible because a dedicated team of trade union activists within our rank and file membership stepped up to the plate and got the job done.

While the MGH project will be the foundation of our growth over the next three to five years it’s not the only card we have to play. We successfully help pass several other school bond measures in Petaluma, Cotati/Rohnert Park and the Santa Rosa Junior College just to name a few. The renovation of our public schools is a top priority as we prepare our children and grandchildren for the jobs of the future. The construction jobs these bond measures will create are equally important to us as we do our part to contribute to a healthy and productive society.

The last election also resulted in victory for many of our endorsed candidates. A few notable campaigns where I believe labor made the difference was the re-election of David Glass as mayor of Petaluma where the margin of victory was less than 100 votes. We pulled out all the stops for Mayor Glass and helped him win a highly contested race. We also were successful in replacing three anti PLA trustees on the board of the Santa Rosa Junior College. These incumbent members of the SRJC board of trustees made PLAs the central issue of their campaigns for re-election and the voters soundly fired them all on Election Day.

With the new SRJC Board in place we now have the opportunity promote the use of PLAs. We will show them how the College of Marin (CoM) used PLAs to achieve the completion of their largest capital improvement projects on time and on budget with the added benefit of employing a local workforce with emphasis on apprenticeship training opportunities. We will also point out how those CoM projects that were left out of the PLA went $4.5 million over budget and were not completed on time. With the passage of the SRJC $410 million bond measure the timing couldn’t be better. I’m confident we’ll receive a fair hearing on the use of PLAs for this work but you can be sure we’ll need all of your support once the issues is scheduled for a vote. We’ll keep you informed and look forward to having a big showing of support, just like we did when we passed the PLA Resolution at the Sonoma County Board of Supervisor.

With the completion of our new training center we finally have the capacity to offer year round journey level training class. Our goal is to provide our membership with the most convenient, cost effective, cutting edge training available. You should have received the 1st quarter course outline and registration forms in the mail. If you did not receive the mailing or if it has been misplaced you can download these documents from the home page of our website. In addition, as an incentive to fill up all the classes our Labor Management Committee has agreed to pick up the cost of all courses this year. In other words there is no good reason not to get your 32 hours continuing education for state certification and improve your skill sets all right here at our new training center with absolutely no cost.

By the way, if the envelope you received this newsletter is stamped URGENT your electrical state certification will expire within the next year and you really need to register for our free class today. Work smart, work safe and may God bless you all.
INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS LOCAL UNION 551

PHOTO CREDIT: Jack Scott

VALUE ON DISPLAY EVERYDAY!

JOHN MCENTAGART - BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVE

What makes us proud to be union? We see the bumper stickers, the signs, or maybe it’s a commercial during the Super Bowl showing the IBEW symbol and the work we do. Well then – what does “Proud to be Union” mean to you? We all have our own reasons to be proud of being a union member. Maybe it’s a combination of the wages, benefit package & working conditions we have earned; maybe it’s the history of the unions, the stories of past and present working class hero’s that we stand with today. The old saying “We stand on the shoulders of those who came before us” has never been more appropriate in this situation. We owe everything we have today to those men and women who came before us. It was their hard work and selfless dedication that paved the way for us today to earn a decent wage that includes benefits for the family and a pension, so that someday we can retire and still enjoy life in retirement.

Without those heroes who came before us – there would be no union!! We all would be out there begging, scratching, back stabbing & clawing to get work – undercutting, underbidding each other – generally sacrificing what dignity we might have to go work at a trade we are skilled at for far less than we deserve. There would be no safety practices, no health care or pension, unless you paid for it yourself. Good luck paying for it yourself with a low wage!! The workers would have no rights because we are expendable. The anti-union movement - Right to Work Law – is very real. In 2012 Michigan became the 24th state to pass right to work laws further crippling the unions in a state where NOBODY thought it was possible.

If we want to keep what we have then we have to move from the sidelines and into action. We must remain vigilant. We cannot afford to be complacent. We must all work together or we will become the next Michigan. We must organize all workers and show the anti-union movement that we are a force and we are not going away – on the contrary, we are getting stronger!! We must stay united in our goals. We must or we die. Remember that united we stand, divided we fall so let’s all stand up, link arms and take one step forward together. When we do that – they WILL step back!! Then we have to stay linked, take another step forward together and watch what happens…

Now let’s take a minute and remember why we are proud to be union – and if you are struggling with that – read up on the history of the unions, not just the IBEW but all unions. Remember that we are part of something amazing – a movement that started 200 years ago. Now it’s our turn to protect it and improve on it for the next generation.

“All skilled labor in Detroit is organized into trade unions,” wrote streetcar driver Malcolm McLeod in 1901. “And through the efforts of those unions we have bettered our conditions, reduced the hours of labor, and increased wages so that we now can find time to educate ourselves and our children and take the place in society which has been denied them.”
REMEMBERS

★ DUES INCREASE: Effective January 1, 2015. “A” members dues increase to $36 per month.
★ CREDIT CARDS: Credit Card payments are no longer accepted over the phone. Please make your payment online or in person. You do not have to be a member of the website to pay online. When paying your dues with a credit card we would appreciate a minimum of 3 months dues. This will help reduce our processing fees.
★ Please keep your address, phone number and email address current with the local as we are starting to email notices to members with email addresses.
★ There are discounts at Unionplus.org. Some examples are 15% discount off your AT&T bill, discounted theme park tickets, motor club and car rental discounts.

MEMBER ASSISTANCE

Sometimes life can be a scramble. Your member assistance Program (MAP) offers confidential assistance and support for a wide range of issues, including legal issues, parenting skills, depression/anxiety, substance abuse, grief and loss, financial planning, job stress etc. All active eligible members of the Inside, Sound & Communications and Residential Health Plan and their families are eligible for this benefit.

Inside members call PacifiCare Behavioral Health (PBH) for pre-authorization prior to receiving any services. THE PBH toll free number is 877-225-2267. When calling mention that you are a member of the Redwood Empire Electrical Workers Health & Welfare Plan. Residential and Sound & Communication members call the same number 877-225-2267. They will ask for your social security number.

CONDOLENCES

Our condolences to the families of our recently departed members:
Samuel Blair passed 08/04/14 - Age 50 - initiated 07/07/99
Joseph Fortin passed 07/18/14 - Age 89 - initiated 02/01/55
Jeff Kostka passed 07/16/14 - Age 55 - initiated 12/02/1997 (Brother of member Mike Kostka)
Adelbert Lewis passed 07/05/14 - Age 82 - initiated 05/01/57

DENISE SOZA - DISPATCHER

Hello Brothers and Sisters,

I am very happy to report that I am back and if full remission from my battle with nephrotic syndrome. Thank you for your kind words, thoughts and prayers while I was away, it meant everything to me. I am looking forward to seeing all of you on job sites, rallies, and some of the fun events we do as a great union!

There have been a few changes in our dispatching rules, please read them below. We have full copies here at the union hall and on our website www.ibewlocal551.org.

#5. The six (6) counties that make up IBEW Local 551 are established as individual employment zones. An applicant must designate, at the time of initial sign in, which employment zone(s) they are available to work in. Employment zones cannot be added after the initial designation.

#11. Applicants shall be issued a maximum of three (3) referrals per Available-for-Work list registration date. Applicants shall have all turndowns reset to zero (0) upon accepting a job call referral in accordance with dispatch rule number ten (10).

#14. Group 1 applicants are entitled to Family and Medical Leave:
Also be informed that vacation/personal times off can be taken a day or more at a time up to 10 calendar days per calendar year.

Work safe out there and I hope to see you soon!

RETIREE LUNCHEON

Retirees Luncheon is held monthly on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at Adel’s restaurant, 456 College Ave., in Santa Rosa at 12:30 pm. Please call Bob McKusick at 707-539-3158 if you have any questions. Come join us!

HEALTH & WELFARE

As of January 1, 2015 the PPO health plan for the Inside Electricians changed from Anthem Blue Cross to Blue Shield of California. You should have already received your new medical/prescription cards. The dental and vision coverage has not changed. Below are the main contact numbers that you should have on hand for Blue Shield of California.

Customer Service (Monday-Friday 7am to 7pm):
(855) 256-9404
Medicare RX Plan Customer Service:
(888) 239-6469
Nurse Help 24/7: (877) 304-0504
To locate a provider you can call customer service or visit www.blueshieldca.com/provider

If you need further assistance you can call the Trust Fund Office at (707) 526-1996.

Residential and Sound & Communication members, call United Administrators at 408-288-4452 with health insurance questions.

The website is www.uastpa.com for information.

C/E and C/W members, call Family Medical Care Plan at 877-937-9602 with health insurance questions.

The website is www.nebf.com/fmcp for information.
Our Old Timers Night/Member Service Pins evening was a success! It was great to see so many new faces. Thanks to our contractors and vendors who so generously donated the door prizes. Numerous service pins were given out including honoring Robert McKusick with 74 YEARS of service to the IBEW!