Dear Sisters and Brothers,

In difficult times like now it is quite natural to focus on the hardships we face. One tends to lose the eternal sense of collective strength and hope that has built our great Country and is the basic foundation of our mighty union. The IBEW has endured for over 118 years, through periods of economic growth and recession, because the desire for dignity and respect in the workplace is only fully realized when workers organize into unions. Union membership gives the average worker a strong voice on the job and helps balance the scales of power with their employers. I would like to highlight several recent benefits our local has achieved as a direct result of our collective strength.

I have concluded negotiations on two new projects in Sonoma County that will provide jobs for years to come. The first project is a new $200 Million, 35-megawatt geothermal power plant. Western GeoPower, Inc. is developing the plant, which will be the first new unit built at the Geysers in over 20 years. This job is located at the site of PG&E’s decommissioned unit 15 about eleven miles up Geyser Road out of Healdsburg. It was very important to secure this work with a Project Labor Agreement to continue our long established history of value and productivity. This project should place the first job calls before the holidays with peak manpower in the Spring.

The second project was negotiated in collaboration with the Accountable Development Coalition (ADC). The ADC is an organization that our local helped establish with the goal of increasing our political outreach and effectiveness by working with other progressive activist groups, primarily around smart growth transit orientated development. We just completed the first Community Benefits Agreement in Sonoma County with Coddington Enterprises for development of their Sonoma Mountain Village project in Rohnert Park. This landmark Agreement requires that all commercial electrical construction be performed to local area standards in accordance with our Collective Bargaining Agreement. It also includes pre-qualification of contractors and enhanced electrical specifications.

On another note, I am currently the lead negotiator for the ADC with the John Stewart Group on their Santa Rosa Railroad Square development. I anticipate a CBA in the future on this project too.

The second phase of the Humboldt Bay Repowering project has started with the first of ten generators scheduled to arrive from Italy September 25th. All generators should be in place by the end of October. The electrical contractor is Neutron and they plan to start hiring in early October once they are given access to the interior of the generator building. Peak manpower is scheduled for December at 60-65 electricians with mechanical completion April 28, 2010.

Towards the end of last Summer, when it became clear that our Country had entered a recession, I instituted several measures to makeup for decreased income to the local's general fund. Last year’s adjustments have allowed our local to maintain a positive cash flow despite reduced work hours. I am very hopeful that the business agent furloughs and budget cuts can soon be reversed as we look forward to better days ahead.

I recently attended a Membership Development Conference where we were encouraged to use social networking websites. To better communicate with our membership I have opened a Twitter account with the following user name: IBEW551_BM. You can follow my tweets by going to our website or by signing up for a Twitter account if you don’t already have one.

Finally, our Health and Welfare Fund continues to operate with income exceeding expenses and very good reserves. The Fund is now reaping the benefit of the return on investment from our large reserves. Strong management and administration policies by the trustees combined with prudent contract allocations to the Fund have made this possible. These accomplishments bring with them a great deal of security for our plan participants and satisfaction in a job well done.

Work smart, work safe and may God bless you all.
INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS LOCAL UNION 551

RECENTLY RETIRED

Congratulations to the following members who have retired from the International so far this year:

Gary Borri initiated in July 1967
Leroy Chapman initiated in June 1966
Richard Edgington initiated in June 1962
Michael Gerboth initiated in June 1983
Jerry Horn initiated in December 1971
Dennis Parmer December 1966

Thank you for your many years of service with IBEW 551. Enjoy your retirement!!

OPERATING ENGINEERS CREDIT UNION - AUTO DUES PAYMENT

Operating Engineers Credit Union is offering our Inside Construction members (with a vacation account) an International dues deduction program.

Save time & money. No checks to write. No postage stamps. No reinstatement fees. No worrying.

Quarterly payment of dues will occur on the 5th of the month (the same day vacation money is deposited) starting in June and again in September, December & March. Please return the enclosed form to the union office to enroll in the automatic dues payment plan so we can get you set up.

The Credit Union is not responsible for notifying you that your savings account does not have sufficient money to pay your Union dues. PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

Veterans Day—Wednesday, 11/11/09
(Inside Construction only)

Thanksgiving—Thursday, 11/26/09
Friday, 11/27/09

Christmas Day—Friday, 12/25/09

JOHN LLOYD - MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTATIVE

We have finally succeeded in the bid to see SJ Cimino Electric debarred. After a very long battle and an even longer case with the state we have the debarment in hand. He will be debarred effective Oct. 15, 2009 for a period of 3 years from all public works projects. His fines were hefty and the state got deeper in his pockets with double fines and penalties on the last project in Fairfield. So with the double fines he has now been fined approximately $500,000.00 and has to make payments because his battle has cost him a fortune. The debarment only covers public works but we are successfully getting him thrown off other projects in the private sector and we will continue this battle as long as it needs to be fought.

We are currently working with the Sonoma County Workforce Investment Board on grants for training.

I would like to see our people from the out of work list sign up for the Joblink program to avail themselves of some of the upcoming training in energy audits and solar verifiers. Both classes are certified by the state and will be free to people signed up with Joblink. By participating in these programs we are availing ourselves of money for training purposes as well.

All City Electric has two jobs in our jurisdiction that I want to Salt. If you want to help the local, let’s try to load these two projects up with union electricians. Call 888-992-1040 and answer the questions in the phone sign up and let me know what is happening. Come in and sign a Salt Agreement and let’s get this company once and for all. The last I heard they were paying journeymen $21.00 an hour which is not even area standards for the non-union. We may picket their projects at some point.

We will resume COMET beginning in October. When you are notified, call and RSVP to the invitation and attend this class. It is required by International and everyone has had to take it. One class, one time and you’re done. Plus you get a free dinner on us!

BENEVOLENT FUND

All members of IBEW Local 551 who make a formal request and are found to be genuinely in need are eligible to receive donations. Some examples of various circumstances are prolonged illness, disability or major illness of an immediate family member.

Your Executive Board voted to send all Local 551 members on the out of work books a $40 Safeway gift card. A lot of our members have been out of work since early 2009. If you would like to make a voluntary contribution to the Benevolent Fund or make a request, contact the hall.

Veterans Day—Wednesday, 11/11/09

Thanksgiving—Thursday, 11/26/09

Variable pension forms have been mailed out. If you are happy with your current selection—DO NOTHING. Please return the forms by October 15 if you would like to change your current contribution.

Friday, 11/27/09

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Things to Remember

Set your clocks back 1 hour at 2:00 am on Sunday, November 1, 2009 as Daylight Savings Ends.

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INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS LOCAL UNION 551

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THE POLITICAL SEASON HAS OFFICIALLY BEGUN. I'M TALKING LOCAL POLITICS, CITY COUNCIL, BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, SCHOOL BOARDS, ASSEMBLY AND SENATE, AND WHILE WE'RE AT IT, WHO'S GOING TO RUN THE STATE THIS TIME AS GOVERNOR. WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO YOU? I WOULD SAY MAINLY "JOBS." IT IS OUR JOB TO MAKE SURE THAT OUR ELECTED LEADERS UNDERSTAND AND FIGHT FOR WORKING FAMILIES, UNION FAMILIES.

Not only should we be paying attention to who’s running the show, but how. There are many issues that we as union members should fight and be concerned about. The Employee Free Choice Act. This gives everyone a fighting chance to join a union. Do our local leaders support this? Health Care Reform with a public option. This is mentioned in the newsletter. There is so much at stake right now and a lot to be done to get there. Will you help get labor friendly candidates elected? Have you wanted to get more involved in your union but not sure where to start? How 'bout a call to the hall?

DAVID BORGESON-BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVE

The past few months have been a continuation of raising our local’s profile here as “The Right Choice”. Whether it be by emphasizing public works monitoring and compliance, various committee memberships, meeting with local elected officials and developers, defending our work from those that want to raid what is ours, or protecting our work under signed agreements, everyday has its own challenges.

Just in the last 2 weeks I have responded to a challenge by the Laborers claiming conduit work at the PGE Generation Station Project, filed a grievance on behalf of the Building Trades Council in Humboldt against Wartsila at the same project for subcontracting to a non-union company, helped to rally and support 2 great candidates for our Harbor District in the upcoming election, sat with a few County Supervisors to explain the importance of prevailing wage, and with the help of NCECI filed a DLSE complaint with the State and a bid protest on a local project.

All this activity is hard to put a value on, unlike being able to see what you’ve accomplished at the end of a day working with the tools, but I can tell you that we are gaining ground. It is my privilege to represent the members of this local at every one of these challenges, especially given the number of you currently on the referral list. We will claw for every job that comes along, and challenge for all work being bid until these awarding bodies and contractors know for sure “The Right Choice.”

Denise Soza-Business Representative

The political season has officially begun. I’m talking local politics, City Council, Board of Supervisors, School boards, Assembly and Senate, and while were at it, who’s going to run the state this time as Governor. Why is this important to you? I would say mainly “jobs”. It is our job to make sure that our elected leaders understand and fight for working families, union families.

Not only should we be paying attention to who’s running the show, but how. There are many issues that we as union members should fight and be concerned about. The Employee Free Choice Act. This gives everyone a fighting chance to join a union. Do our local leaders support this? Health Care Reform with a public option. This is mentioned in the newsletter. There is so much at stake right now and a lot to be done to get there. Will you help get labor friendly candidates elected? Have you wanted to get more involved in your union but not sure where to start? How ‘bout a call to the hall?

If you receive emails from this hall about rallies, bar-b-ques, volunteering for Habitat for Humanity, etc. Please come down and get involved. It’s good for you and good for the union. Walk for a candidate, get on the phone, show up to more meetings. I know, the economy sucks right now. Let’s do something about it. Without “U” there is no Union.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

The IBEW supports the fight for REAL health care reform.

Why Do We Need Health Care Reform?

- Health care premiums are increasing three times faster than wages or inflation
- Health insurance company profits have increased more than 1,000 percent during the past five years
- Workers who have health insurance now pay 68 percent more than they did in 2000
- Every thirty seconds, someone files for medical bankruptcy in the United States

The Status quo is unsustainable and without action health care costs will crush families and businesses.

Five Points the IBEW Considers Essential for REAL Health Care Reform to Benefit Working Families

1. A public health insurance option should be included. This will provide competition for insurance companies, drive out waste, bring down costs, and guarantee health care for all.
2. Health benefits should not be taxed. Taxing benefits will raise the costs for workers at a time when they need relief.
3. Employers should be required to pay their fair share (Play-or-Pay). This will keep companies that do not provide health care from shifting the costs to all of us.
4. Small businesses should not be exempt. Small IBEW employers provide health insurance for their workers, and exemptions put them at a competitive disadvantage for doing the right thing.
5. Affordable coverage for pre-Medicare retirees should be offered. Currently, workers who retire before age 65 have no affordable options for finding coverage on their own.
SOLAR SAFETY CLASS

MONDAY, OCTOBER 12
10 AM—4:30 PM
Class will be held here upstairs in the Local Union meeting room.
We are going to be holding classes during the day for our out of work members. If we get a good response we will continue to hold evening classes also.
Classes will be updated on our website or the JATC’s. We recently held a Solar Code/2008 NEC 690 changes class and this class was well attended.

THANKS VOLUNTEERS!!

Also THANK YOU to Craig Foley, Charlie O’Neil, Eamonn O’Halloran, and Sam Wimmer for helping move the North Bay Labor Council into our Building.

STEVE STOBEL—JATC TRAINING DIRECTOR
I recently had the privilege of attending the Western States Competition (in Medford, Oregon) with 2009 Outstanding Inside Wireman Apprentice, Omar Munoz. This get together takes place every year, usually late Summer, at a different JATC that has applied to be a host. The competition this year had 24 JATC’s represented from seven States.

The Saturday morning contest started at 8:00am with the Wiremen drawing a motor control diagram with specific components and their final operation requirements. They proceed to a material identification test, some of which I was not even familiar with. The next task is to build the motor control project that they had drawn up earlier, the diagram is not checked by the judges to see if it will work until after the contestants wire it at their work station. Part 4 is a residential wiring project consisting of: a half-hot receptacle, a set of three way switches controlling a light, and a doorbell/chime.

The afternoon was made up of two conduit bending sessions. The first part was ½ EMT with offsets, 3 point saddle, and stub ups. The second part was ½ rigid, with a hickey, the same tasks and different configuration. All of the tasks are timed, must work, and the conduit must fit a “jig” built by the Judges.

We were pleased to see Bruce Piper, President of Local #551, stop by and watch some of the competition. Congratulations to Omar Munoz! You represented the Redwood Empire JATC very well!