Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Looking back on 2009, I can’t help but be angry at the Wall Street corporate greed that caused us to enter the worst recession since the Great Depression. In the thirty years that I have worked in the construction industry this is the most difficult situation in memory. I started my apprenticeship with our local back in 1981 at a time when the IBEW and other Building Trades unions were struggling. The Building Trades were under attack by the Business Roundtable who had determined it was in their best interest to promote a “low wage” non-union business model to drive down construction costs and increase corporate profits.

Unfortunately, these anti-union policies have been successfully employed against all of organized labor and are directly responsible for the erosion of the middle class over the last several decades. These corporate fat cats have no shame or remorse. They are completely driven by the bottom line, in other words what’s good for Wall Street is good for American workers. This is known as trickle down economics and right wing conservatives whole-heartedly believe in this model.

Frederick Douglas once famously proclaimed that “power concedes nothing without a fight” and today we find ourselves in the middle of that fight. That’s why workers must act together for shared prosperity, dignity and respect in the workplace. That’s why labor unions are more important today than ever. We must push back the balance of power in America away from selfish business interests that put profits and greed above people and back towards working families. We can’t always match the money or political influence of Big Business but we will always outmatch them in people power and in the persistence and resolve to achieve justice.

Times are hard out there right now, jobs have been scarce and people are hurting, but we are not without hope. It looks like a recovery has started with home sales reaching their highest level in two and a half years. Capital spending and investments are slowly starting to revitalize the economy. A Brookings Institution report has estimated that nearly half of the structures that will be in existence in America in 2030 have not even been built yet. I am optimistic for the future and believe that IBEW/NECA are well positioned to take advantage of the emerging Clean Energy economy that we hear so much about in the news.

Our efforts here at the union hall are focused on securing jobs for our contractors, which put our members back to work. I reported in the last newsletter on a Project Labor Agreement that we successfully negotiated for a new geothermal power plant at the Geysers at the site of the old PG&E Unit fifteen. That project has been delayed because of a lack of financing and the merger of Western GeoPower, the original development company, with RAM Power out of Reno. I am working with RAM Power to find capital for the project from several different sources including our NEBF pension fund. This is a shovel ready project that would immediately generate approximately two hundred and fifty building trades jobs. Once completed it would add 35 MW of renewable energy to the California Renewable Energy Portfolio. We need this project and I am hopeful a deal can be reached for financing very soon.

The Humboldt Bay Power Plant in Eureka has not taken the number of electricians that they projected because of a problem delivering the ten generators and engines packages to the jobsite. They have arrived from Italy and are currently in storage waiting for a decision to be made about repair or improvements to the road that leads to the project. It is expected that the weight of the generator sets will cause the roadway to fail. The latest rumor that we hear is they should have all units in place by the end of January. Job calls are expected to commence shortly after the first generator is set in place and continue as additional units arrive on site.

One requirement for electrical re-certification is proof of 32 hours continuing education relevant to your category of certification before the expiration of your certification card. I have been working with the Statewide Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee (SJATC) to establish an on-demand web-based training platform to (Continued on page 2)
provide a convenient, cost effective method for meeting the continuing education requirement. The SJATC has circulated a Request for Proposal and is currently in the process of reviewing the proposals received. The goal is to have the service available to all IBEW members through participating JATC’s by the 2nd quarter of 2010.

The IBEW is “The Union of Hearts and Minds” and in keeping with our creed I was able to establish our Benevolent Fund shortly after taking office in 2004 to assist members in times of need. The Fund has assisted many over the years on a case-by-case basis. The executive board typically reviews each individual request for assistance to determine compliance with the established purpose of the Fund and the amount of grant funding if permissible.

In response to the high level of unemployment within our industry the executive board decided to provided a monthly Safeway grocery card to all local 551 members on the available for work list during the last four months. This level of assistance would not be possible without the regular contributions, equal to working assessments, primarily from Denise Soza, and myself to the Benevolent Fund. I know this cannot take the place of a job and we can’t meet every need but it has made a difference for some and given hope to many others.

Work smart, work safe and may God bless you all.

RESINNS

Resin will start on Wednesday, December 23rd and go through Monday, January 4th.

Solar Sonoma County is a consortium of local governments, businesses and other local entities and individuals working collaboratively to identify and implement initiatives to promote, expand, and accelerate solar photovoltaic and solar thermal energy generation and energy efficiency throughout Sonoma County. Check out their website at solarsonomacounty.com. Join today!!

VACATION ACCOUNT

For those of you that have misplaced the phone number or address for the Operating Engineers Credit Union it is:

- 6225 State Farm Drive, Ste. 102
- Rohnert Park, CA.
- Phone Number 707-585-1552

Money is deposited on the 5th of each month and is from the month following the previous month. Example:

- December 2009 money will be deposited on February 5, 2010.

JOHN LLOYD - MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTATIVE

We are hoping to see the light at the end of the tunnel soon and see our jurisdiction’s work start to grow. It has been a rough time for many. It will be nice to get our members back to work.

We are entering a new phase in the renewable energy market with the strategic partnership with JA Solar. On December 11, 2009 we presented a PPA (Power Purchase Agreement) proposal to the Sonoma County Office of Education. On the 14th I received an email from the board and found that 14 schools are interested in this program at this point and hoping for more to follow. This program will see photovoltaics installed on schools in Sonoma County at no cost to the schools. They will pay for the electricity generated to JA Solar at a great deal of savings. Meadow School, in Petaluma could save over $6,000 a year on their electric bill. These systems will all be installed by IBEW electricians and apprentices. None of this work has to be bid competitively since it is a PPA.

I am also proud to say that we had our first CSLB sting in Marin County recently. On December 9 and 10 we had a home in Novato for the sting and we are waiting to hear how successful this was. We will be holding one in Sonoma County soon.

Recently through the efforts of many, we had some luck in seeing All City Electric and North Bay Contracting workers come forward to get what was owed them. All City workers are owed some $20,000 each and North Bay Contracting has not paid the proper wages to their employees. These companies will be in the newsletter from time to time as the cases progress.

I am currently teaching “Photovoltaic’s Design and Installation” to our members. Next class for this session will resume on Saturday, January 9, 2010. I took this course from Solar Energy International in Colorado. This is a good course and will train our electricians to properly install photovoltaic systems. The first class has already started with the second starting January 30th and running consecutively with the first course. This is six classes on Saturdays and a complete course with 48 CEU’s. Once this is complete we will attack the hands on classes. We will see to it that our members are the best trained for this exciting work in renewable energy.

I want to wish all our members and their families a very Prosperous New Year and remember “An optimist stays up until midnight to see the New Year in, A pessimist stays up to make sure the old year leaves”
Seasons Greetings from the North,

Finally some positive news to report resulting from our 3 year long compliance efforts on public works projects in Humboldt and Del Norte Counties. On Dec. 9th the DLSE issued a Civil Wage and Penalty Assessment of just over $333,000 against Colburn Electric for non-payment of overtime on a project in Crescent City. It has been a long held suspicion that the only way this contractor could dominate the public works here was by taking advantage of the workers. This Assessment has taken an incredible amount of time to put together, but we believe that this has always been the necessary first step in order to attract more of our contractors to resume bidding in the northern counties of our jurisdiction. We expect to build on this win, and have in fact already used this information in 2 bid protests that have this contractor as the listed sub, more on that later. I hope this comes as encouraging news to all of you, especially those waiting for that next dispatch. This area has always been a tough place to be a union electrician, now it may begin to change for the better for all electricians, by not letting certain contractors enjoy a competitive advantage on the back of the workers.

Stay safe, Happy New Year.

DAVID BORGESON-BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVE

Congratulations to John Quinto for receiving $100 for attending the most union meetings in 2009 John attended all 12!!

In order for you to work for a non union employer as a SALT—YOU MUST sign a SALT Agreement.

DENISE SOZA-BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVE

Seasons Greetings Brothers and Sister

I would like to extend my gratitude to all who volunteered throughout the year. Being out in the community as you have for various projects has brought great gratitude and positive change to our communities.

If you find yourself with some time we have volunteer opportunities here that can change your life and the lives of others. What can you do with your spare time? Work with the tools? The union hall will be installing a new phone banking system, interested? Habitat for Humanity has started 2 new homes in Healdsburg. These are also great opportunities for apprentices to sharpen their skills.

After our new system is wired we will be looking for volunteers that like to be on the phones to call for local candidates running in 2010 which is just a couple of weeks away. If you don’t like being inside we have plenty of opportunities to walk for our labor candidates in your neighborhoods.

With a high level of attention on the economy we have the need of urgency to make things happen now. Let’s get into action. I know that with the great volunteers out of this hall we won’t just make it happen, we’ll be making sure we have good time doing it. Whatever we endure, don’t be discouraged, get encouraged.

I would like to send a congratulations to James Zwosta for his appointment as “Chair of Policy Council” for the school districts Head Start Program in Lake and Mendocino County. Very Nice!

Have a Happy and Safe Holiday!!

Excerpt from the inside agreement:

Article III Section 3.16 Authority of Foreman

On jobs having a Foreman present, no one except the Foreman shall issue directions or orders to the employees on the job.
THANKS VOLUNTEERS!!!

Thank you to all of the following who have volunteered during the year: Jim McQuaid, Julio Soto, James Zwosta, Bill Farman, Tangi Tunoa, Charlie O’Neil, Jesus Reyes, Onesimo Montes Rico, Larry Metz, Rueben Pickering, Larry Albini, Sam Wimmer, Craig Foley, Hannah Dolan, John House, Ed Matticola, Daniel Martinez & Eamonn O’Halloran.

A free shirt is waiting for each of you at the Union office!!

STEVE STOBEL—JATC TRAINING DIRECTOR

The dream of the Redwood Empire JATC owning a training facility is looking more like a reality. The membership voted to allocate .50.25 per hour, from a pay raise negotiated during the 2005 – 2008 Collective Bargaining Agreement, to a Building Fund for a Training Center.

We have been looking at properties from Windsor to Petaluma, along the Highway 101 corridor, since March 2009. In July we received information that the best property we had looked at up to that time had dropped in price by 20%. It is located at a business park in Petaluma, size: 18,500 sq. ft., condition: excellent.

In early November the REJATC Committee gave approval to make offers on two properties, the above being one of them. The offer for the Petaluma property was accepted very quickly.

We are now in a 60 day "due diligence" phase. During this time frame we have had a full inspection of the building, environmental report done, and permit applications submitted to the City of Petaluma. Either party can end the transaction, without penalties, during this phase.

If our time schedule stays on track we will start the Fall 2010 school year in our new facility. We anticipate making this a "state of the art" Training Center that we will use for Apprentices and Journeyman for at least the next thirty years.

STREAMING LIVE VIDEO

We are hoping that by the Union Meeting in January 2010 you will have the opportunity to “attend” the monthly union meeting by live video. In order for you to be able to do this, you must be a member of our website. Go to ibewlocal551.org and on the right hand side under member log in click on not registered yet to sign up. You will be sent an email to confirm your membership. The equipment has been ordered and hopefully we will be online for the January 2010 meeting.

This will enable our members who cannot make it to the meetings to be actively involved by attending “streaming live video”.

KEEP INFORMATION CURRENT

We are trying to “stay with the times” and keep you up to date as much as possible here at Local 551. All of this is only possible if you:

- Keep your address and phone number current
- Sign up as a member on our webpage
- Use your card that was sent to you by the International office to check your initiation date, beneficiaries etc.
- You can now follow the Business Manager and his everyday activities by becoming a member of Twitter.