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Electrical Work
for Electrical Workers



International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

Local Union No. 176 Joliet, Illinois

April 29, 2020

Brothers and Sisters,

I have been presented with a few questions regarding the process to vote on ratifying our inside settlement agreement as well as questions about allocating the wage increase of \$2.40 that will take effect on June 1, 2020. There has been a great deal of discussion between the officers of the local, the IBEW International, and our legal counsel as how to best proceed with these matters. Our goal is to make the process as fair, transparent, and accessible to everyone as possible.

First of all, I have received questions on the actual process that will be implemented when submitting and counting ballots. When you receive your ballot in the mail, it will include a unique self-addressed stamped envelope. This envelope will be addressed to a special restricted-access post office box. All ballots will be mailed to this special post office box. On May 22, 2020, myself, President Nick Olson, Recording Secretary Wes Klicker, and Executive Board President Aaron Battistelli will retrieve the ballots from the post office box. We will take them to the union hall where the four of us will tally the ballots, as well as the results of the wage allocations. All ballots will be opened with all four officers present. No ballots will be opened prior to May 22, 2020.

Another question I have received is what happens if the ratification fails and the contract goes to CIR? As of today, CIR has been moved from May to the middle of July. If the ratification vote were to fail, July would be the earliest that we would be able to go to CIR. I've also been asked how does CIR work and what do you think would happen if they had to settle our contract? The CIR panel is made up of twelve members, six representatives from the IBEW and six representatives from NECA. Our local area agreements and standards far exceed what the IBEW has in most other parts of the country. The twelve members of the CIR panel will come from all over the country and not from our local area. Because of where these panel members are from, they very well could look at what we have and not be very sympathetic to our arguments why we deserve more. All decisions rendered by CIR are unanimous as all panel members must agree before a decision becomes official. When CIR makes a decision, they inform the involved parties by mail. If we went to CIR in July, they would make a decision sometime after our hearing date. CIR would then mail the decision to the affected parties. This means that if we had a hearing in July, the earliest we would probably get a decision is sometime in early August. CIR does not issue decisions that are retroactive, so therefore we would work under our current contract until their decision is issued. With this being the case, if CIR decided to award any wage increase or decrease, it would not become affective until sometime after their meeting date in July.

As far as what would happen if we went to CIR that would be a roll of the dice. The entirety of the inside agreement could be opened up. I believe it would be a bad idea to even consider going to CIR, especially under the current economic situation that has been created by the COVID-19 pandemic, The NDERA Agreement that the International IBEW and National NECA negotiated is an example of what comes out of Washington when things get decided at a national level. My fear is that things in that agreement, like journeyman recall rights and Helpers could be argued for by NECA and added to our

inside agreement. Judging by past practice from CIR, I would say the best-case scenario is that we would probably get a wage increase close to what we have negotiated on a one-year contract that would expire in May of 2021. I would say worst case would be we get an extension of our current contract, and possible negative language changes such as recall rights added to our agreement. In normal circumstances it would be difficult to get something close to what we have negotiated with NECA, let alone during a national pandemic in which the national economy has ground to halt in most sectors of the economy. I would strongly advise a yes vote on the settlement agreement and avoid CIR during this uncertain time.

I believe the main reason to vote yes on the inside settlement agreement is not to avoid CIR, but that it is a good agreement. Like any settlement agreement, we did not get everything we asked for, neither did NECA. In fact, we gave no language changes up in this settlement agreement with NECA. We did a great deal of research to determine what would be a fair contract wage increase. All of the studies and information we looked at were collected prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. Some of the information we gathered included the following. According to Mercer's US Compensation Planning Survey, the average salary increase is expected to be 3.0% in 2020. HR consultants Korn Ferry estimated that the average salary growth in 2020 would be 2.8%. Civilian Federal Employees received on average a 3.1% increase for 2020. The Social Security Administration in October announced a 1.6% cost-of-living adjustment for 2020. Basically, before the stock market downturn and the COVID-19 outbreak, we found wage increases nationally projected to be somewhere between 1.6% and 3.1%. The wage increase that we have negotiated is towards the top end of this range and higher than the only other local near us who has a settled wage increase coming this year, local 134. We achieved what five other neighboring locals wish they could have achieved, a good solid agreement before the pandemic and current economic situation hit. I also believe it is important that we get better language in our agreements to provide job protections for jobsite stewards. Language that would ensure the steward be one of the last people laid off from a job. I would also like to see language that prevent the contractor from retaliating against the steward for doing their job in enforcing our agreements at the jobsite. The language in our settlement agreement with NECA that will open the agreement next year to negotiate these items was not just an effort to just kick the can down the road. There are two key items that we negotiated into the language reopener. One, if the contractors want a wage opener, we will have to come to an agreement on these two items. Two, none of the items in the contract opener next year will be subject to CIR. I believe the fact that CIR will be out of the picture will give us a better chance to negotiate these items into our agreement.

I once again would like to encourage everyone to vote yes on the contract settlement. This settlement agreement provides a fair wage increase, a real opportunity to negotiate break and steward protections in our agreement next year, and some certainty and stability in a turbulent time in this country. I personally want to express a heartfelt thankyou to every member of this local and their families in dealing with the ever-changing situations caused by this pandemic. Stay safe and stay unified.

In Solidarity,



Michael J. Clemmons
Business Manager