



International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

LOCAL UNION NUMBER 553

POST OFFICE BOX 13551

RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, NORTH CAROLINA 27709

TELEPHONE: 919.596.8220 • FAX: 919.596.6657 • EMAIL: office@ibew553.org



Dear Members of Local 553,

Season's Greetings! 🌲 I hope that all of you are doing well and staying safe. As we wrap up 2024, it's important to reflect on the incredible strides we've made together. In just this year alone, we've grown from 652 members to 951 members, which is a testament to your dedication and the strength of Local 553. Without your good work, our contractor partners would not bid on work in our jurisdiction. In 2018, we sent out 237 Christmas cards; today, it is fantastic to report that we're approaching an incredible milestone of nearly 1,000 members.

Here are some key highlights from 2024:

Membership Growth and Recognition:

This year, Local 553 achieved a record four consecutive years in the IBEW Top 20 for growth. This is a feat unmatched by any other IBEW local. I was honored to be named Organizing Business Manager of the Year, but this award is truly a reflection of your hard work and commitment.

Grants and Bonuses:

Over the past few years, we have secured more than \$100,000 in grants, which were used to provide bonuses to new members and to reward current members who referred them. These efforts have helped fuel our growth and strengthen our Local, ensuring continued opportunities for all our members.

Negotiations and Agreements:

I am proud to share that our members were more involved in the Inside Electrician Agreement than ever before. Our members met multiple times to discuss negotiations, and we put together an excellent negotiations committee. We also conducted our first-ever allocation meeting. Seeing our member involvement meant a great deal to me, and I hope this continues to grow.

Other highlights of our Inside negotiations include:

- Securing a \$5.30 for allocation, the highest in our history for wage and pension increases also covers the healthcare increases and a new benefit (Benny) card for all of our members.
- Apprentices wages now begin at 65%, the highest in the Carolinas, thanks to groundwork laid before negotiations.
- Introducing new language addressing heat stress, anti-harassment, and surety bond requirements, ensuring contractors fulfill benefit obligations.

While there are always challenges, such as not securing PTO, paid holidays, and drive-time compensation this round, I want to assure you that these issues remain priorities for future agreements and recognize holidays as hours worked.



International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

LOCAL UNION NUMBER 553

POST OFFICE BOX 13551

RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, NORTH CAROLINA 27709

TELEPHONE: 919.596.8220 • FAX: 919.596.6657 • EMAIL: office@ibew553.org



In 2024, Business Managers in the Carolinas negotiated our Outside agreement. While I know so many of our outside members travel regularly – it is the nature of the work – I want our linemen, groundsmen, and operators to reap the benefits of IBEW wages and improved agreements, with better local work opportunities and benefits in the Carolinas.

I am also preparing for a busy year of negotiations for our unit members, whose agreements will be bargained in 2025.

Education and Training:

This year, we expanded our training programs, including NC License Prep, Code of Excellence, and Steward Training, this year more Safety Training, OSHA 10, and plans to introduce CPR training. This summer, we helped organize and host a retreat at the Avila Center for our women union members. These opportunities empower our members and strengthen our jurisdiction.

Hall Renovations and Events:

Our meeting room is fully renovated, featuring modern updates like the largest TV I've ever seen to project information and presentations. While the lobby and patio areas are next on our list, our hall has become a recognizable community landmark, often praised by those passing by on Highway 70.

Community and Contractor Relations:

Local 553 remains inclusive and diverse, welcoming anyone who wants to excel as an electrician, lineman, or single-employer group worker. We've quadrupled our contractor base, and while grievances remain part of business, we continue to move forward and maintain strong contractor relationships.

Affinity Groups:

We are fortunate to have members that care and want to reach out to the community to offer what we have to everyone in our jurisdiction. In 2024, our RENEW and Women's Group assisted us with recruiting and engaging our members to be more involved. We sent members of our Women's Committee to our IBEW bi-annual conference in New Orleans. I would love to see this work continue and have members begin a Veteran's Committee and Electrical Worker's Minority Caucus.

As a reminder, ALL 553 members may participate in these affinity groups. Please get in touch with me if you are interested in joining or forming a group.



International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

LOCAL UNION NUMBER 553

POST OFFICE BOX 13551

RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, NORTH CAROLINA 27709

TELEPHONE: 919.596.8220 • FAX: 919.596.6657 • EMAIL: office@ibew553.org



Looking forward, as we head into 2025:

- Of course, we need to grow grow grow our jurisdictional worker base in the Triangle and beyond.
- Continue supporting our single-employer groups, like those at Fort Liberty and Siemens, who provide critical services nationwide.
- Host another Labor Day Picnic, this time with a DJ, and complete further renovations to make our hall an even better space for gatherings and training.

My final reflection is one of gratitude to our membership. None of this progress would be possible without your contributions to our local union. Through monetary contributions, at union meetings, on job sites, and within our community, your work ensures that Local 553 continues to grow and thrive and we are recognized as a leading local within the IBEW. I can't tell you enough how grateful I am to see our local reflect the value of its members. I always wanted Local 553 to be a union we were proud to be a part of. I am honored to be a member standing beside my brothers and sisters.

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your Business Manager. It is an honor and a privilege to represent you. I wish you and your families a joyful holiday season and a prosperous New Year!

Thank you



W.Rob Axford

Business Manager

IBEW LU 553

Cell#: 919-323-5570

Office: 919-596-8220