

NEWS RELEASE

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers®
AFL-CIO-CLC

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No Room In Union For Complacency Lack Of Strong Work Ethic

IBEW Expects to Take Leadership Role in Revitalization of Labor Movement

Delegates to Consider New Resources for Organizing

Cleveland – Calling for a new attitude of excellence, accomplishment and productivity in the workplace as a cornerstone for growth, Edwin D. Hill, president of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, told delegates to the union's 37th convention here today that the union must organize and grow if it is going to advance the cause of working families.

"Nothing less than a sustained commitment to excellence is acceptable," said Hill, who was elected to a second full five-year term by the convention. "We are going to continue to preach and do what it takes to build a positive attitude – not just the positive attitude on the job but a belief in ourselves – that we can do anything to succeed."

Hill said the IBEW would continue to duplicate its successful organizing strategy in Florida, where the union has expanded market share in the construction industry and organized workers in other sectors, including telecommunications. As a result, the union has begun to stem the tide of membership losses.

"Florida has been the laboratory for a new way of operating and organizing and taking on the challenges that we once thought were too tough," Hill said. The IBEW plans to expand on those successes, including developing region-based organizing councils for multiple-industry approaches.

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“The idea is to provide the kind of genuine, solid support that has been missing from our strategy, support that will encourage rank-and-file participation, identify winnable targets – of which there are literally thousands – and go after them in a coherent, well-planned manner,” Hill said.

Hill called for a recommitment by the union to mobilize members for political action, saying the fortunes of union members are tied to government policies.

“It will be up to us this year to make some of the right-wing zealots pack their bags, sneak out of town and go collect the reward that they have bought with their votes – and I say to them you have done irreparable harm to the working men and women of this country,” Hill said. “We must take back our share of political power in Canada and the United States.”

He also warned that national security was being compromised by the proliferation of foreign ownership of U.S. assets, particularly essential utility infrastructure. He blamed corporations for “putting America up for sale” and “selling it off piece by piece.”

Hill challenged the Bush administration’s mantra of “national security,” pointing to economic policies that encouraged the increase in the national debt, with foreign nations holding \$2.4 trillion in U.S. bonds.

“George Bush and his party talk about national security,” he said. “Where’s the security in having large segments of our economy controlled by overseas masters?”

Although Hill warned against the corruption of corporate power, he also encouraged constructive dialogue with employers.

“Let’s remember that those who have the power to make our lives miserable also have the power to make it better – if they will stop fighting us and realize that we all have a stake in this game,” he said.

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The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers represents some 750,000 members who work in construction, utilities, telecommunications, manufacturing, railroads and government in the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico, Panama, Guam and Saipan.