



Building America Back Better Biden's Agenda is Working for the IBEW

How President Biden's actions benefit working families and IBEW members

FULFILLING A CRITICAL CAMPAIGN PROMISE ON INFRASTRUCTURE

President Biden promised to put America back to work. On March 31, he shared his [plan to deliver](#), with a historic \$2 trillion package to rebuild a diminished infrastructure, battle climate change and take on global competitors.

The eight-year proposal will put the United States on the path to a revitalized domestic infrastructure while creating tens of thousands of jobs in several of the IBEW's core sectors. Biden's plan will:

- Upgrade the electric grid by laying thousands of miles of new transmission lines, modernizing power generation and delivering clean energy: \$100 billion
- Construct 500,000 electric vehicle charging stations and retool factories to produce batteries and electric vehicles: \$173 billion
- Revitalize American manufacturing: \$300 billion
- Invest in research and development on advanced manufacturing: \$180 billion
- Upgrade transportation, highways, bridges, ports, transit systems and airports: More than \$100 billion
- Deliver reliable and affordable high-speed broadband to all Americans: \$100 billion
- Invest in workforce development programs: \$100 billion
- Repair and upgrade Amtrak and modernize its Northeast Corridor: \$80 billion
- Make infrastructure more resilient: \$50 billion
- Clean up mines, brownfields and Superfund sites: \$21 billion



Pittsburgh Local 29 lineman Mike Fiore introduced President Biden before his March 31 infrastructure speech.

The plan will ensure that American taxpayers' dollars benefit working families and their communities by requiring goods and materials be made in America and transported on U.S.-crewed and -flagged ships. It will also safeguard workers' right to organize, join a union and bargain collectively. It asks Congress to tie clean energy and infrastructure investments to prevailing wages, local hire rules and apprenticeship programs.

"The American Jobs plan is an investment in America's workers and communities to not only rebuild the physical infrastructure and the battered economy but to harness new technologies to reposition the United States as a leader against global competitors like China," said IBEW President Lonnie Stephenson. "This plan utilizes and creates jobs in nearly every branch of the IBEW's membership."

President Biden traveled to Pennsylvania to announce the plan. He was introduced by Pittsburgh Local 29 member Mike Fiore, a lineman employed by Duquesne Light, who talked about the need for the Build Back Better plan.

"What President Biden is proposing isn't just an investment in infrastructure," Fiore said. "It's an investment in good union jobs. It's an investment in good schools and strong communities. It's an investment in the future of so many forgotten parts of America."

Pennsylvania was once a global leader in manufacturing and good union jobs, Fiore said. "It can be that way again. President Biden has a solid plan to make it happen."



HELPING AMERICA DIG OUT FROM UNDER THE PANDEMIC: 'SHOTS IN ARMS, MONEY IN POCKETS'

President Biden signed the \$1.9 trillion [American Rescue Plan](#) on March 12, sending more stimulus checks, helping vaccine distribution and re-opening schools. (The plan also included a fix for multiemployer pension plans, which you can read more about below.) These measures have helped individuals, states and communities recover from the year-long pandemic.

The popular legislation passed the Democratic-majority House of Representatives and Senate without any support from Republicans.

Biden's top priority, the plan was accomplished in his 50th day in office. The law includes:

- \$1,400 stimulus checks to individuals making up to \$75,000 a year
- Extending enhanced unemployment insurance by six months, through September
- \$7.5 billion to increase the pace of coronavirus vaccine distribution, \$5.2 billion for vaccines and supplies and \$10 billion to expand domestic production of PPE, vaccines and supplies under the Defense Production Act
- Expanding eligibility for the Affordable Care Act
- Subsidies covering 100 percent of health care premiums for COBRA-eligible individuals who lose their jobs for six months

SIGNING THE BUTCH LEWIS ACT: A KEY IBEW VICTORY

President Biden has signed the Butch Lewis Emergency Pension Plan Relief Act, one of the IBEW's biggest legislative priorities.

With Biden's signature, help is on the way for troubled pension plans and the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation. The new law also provides temporary relief for single and multiemployer plans in good standing, including IBEW plans like the National Electrical Benefit Fund. It accomplishes this with no reductions in benefits for participants.

During debate, every Republican senator (led by Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, lead author of the [Grassley-Alexander white paper](#)) voted in favor of pulling the pension language out of the bill it was attached to. Democrats unified against the gambit, voting it down 50-49.

"The Democrats are standing up and moving on issues that matter," said Austin Keyser, director of the IBEW Political & Legislative Affairs Department.

President Stephenson and Secretary-Treasurer Kenny Cooper remained steadfast and withstood significant pressure to bargain away guarantees in the Butch Lewis Act. Instead, the IBEW benefited when Republicans lost their slim advantage in the Senate.

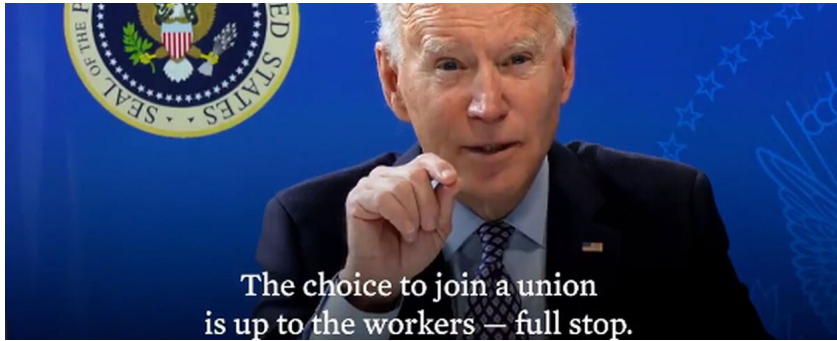
"They tried to eliminate the defined pension benefit system," Stephenson said. "We worked hard to change the negotiating table."

"So many people said, 'This is not going to happen,'" said Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), who sponsored the Butch Lewis Act and championed the issue for five years. "We knew that [Americans] would keep fighting, and we did it."

ADVOCATING FOR FAIRER LABOR LAWS

The House of Representatives passed the most significant potential change to labor law in more than 70 years on March 9.

The [Protecting the Right to Organize Act](#), or PRO Act, passed 225-206, with the support of all but a single Democrat – 213 had sponsored the bill – and five of 211 Republicans.



President Biden recorded a video sharing his unequivocal support for collective bargaining and union rights.

The bill contains more than 30 substantial reforms and updates to existing labor law to expand protections of workers' rights, punish companies for violating those rights and to reset the rules so union elections will be free, fair and safe.

It also undoes one of the most harmful labor policies ever passed in the United States, dissolving so-called right-to-work laws nationwide.

"Nearly 60 million Americans would join a union if they get a chance, but too many employers and states prevent them from doing so through anti-union attacks," President Joe Biden said in a [statement](#) before passage of the bill. "They know that without unions, they can run the table on workers — union and nonunion alike."

The PRO Act can

TRANSFORM THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT.

PASS THE PRO ACT

- ✓ Prevents employers from interfering in union elections
- ✓ Protects workers who engage in peaceful protest actions with their fellow workers
- ✓ Prevents employers from misclassifying workers as independent contractors
- ✓ Prohibits employers from requiring workers to attend anti-union meetings
- ✓ Creates a mediation and arbitration process to ensure newly formed unions reach a first contract
- ✓ Authorizes meaningful penalties for employers that violate workers' rights
- ✓ Removes prohibitions on workers acting in solidarity with workers at other workplaces
- ✓ Prohibits companies from permanently replacing workers who participate in a strike
- ✓ Disclose contracts with consultants hired to persuade employees on how to exercise their rights

IBEW President Lonnie Stephenson said the PRO Act is the most extensive expansion of workplace democracy since the 1935 passage of the Wagner Act, which created the National Labor Relations Board and granted private sector workers the right to form and join unions.

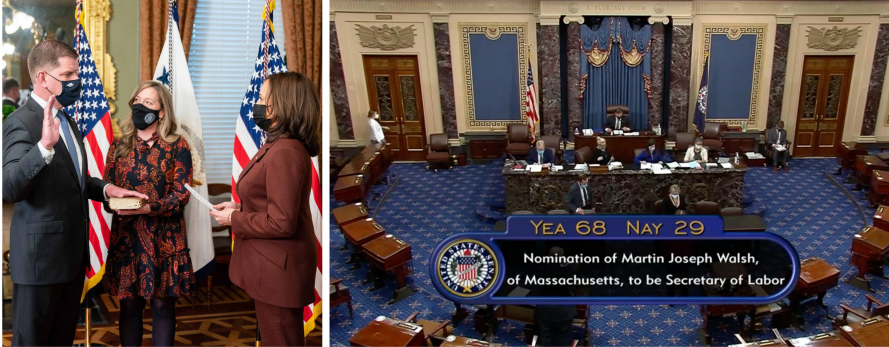
"Where unions are strong, wages are higher for typical workers – union and nonunion alike," Stephenson said in a letter sent to all members of the House before the vote. "Family-sustaining middle-class jobs are the route to economic security and there is no better path to the middle class than a union job with the security it provides."

A similar bill died last year when the Republican Senate was controlled by then-Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and the Trump White House vehemently opposed it.



USHERING IN A NEW ERA AT THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Former Boston Mayor [Marty Walsh was sworn in as U.S. labor secretary](#) on March 23, the first union member in 45 years to lead the Department of Labor.



Union member and friend of labor Marty Walsh was confirmed as Secretary of Labor on March 23.

Eighteen Republican senators joined all Democrats to support Walsh's nomination, voting 68-29 to confirm him.

"I spent my entire career fighting for working people, and I'm eager to continue that fight in Washington," Walsh said.

Walsh's confirmation as an unabashed union advocate is historic — an irony that Ohio Sen. Sherrod Brown pointed out on the Senate floor before the vote.

"Too many people in this town don't know what it's like not to have a voice on the job. They don't understand collective bargaining and the power that a union card gives you over your career and your finances and your future," Brown said.

"Marty Walsh does understand it. Like President Biden, he's not afraid to talk about the labor movement; he doesn't recoil from using the word 'union.'"

Walsh, the son of Irish immigrants, followed his father and uncle into Laborers Local 223 and its leadership. He went on to head the Greater Boston Building Trades coalition, while also serving 16 years in the Massachusetts Legislature.

IBEW President Lonnie Stephenson said that choosing Walsh is one of the many ways that President Biden is keeping his campaign promises to help American workers.

"He chose someone from the union movement, not just someone who supports us from the outside," he said. "As much as we greatly need and appreciate every ally we have, there's a difference when you understand something because you've lived it. All workers, union and nonunion, are better off now that Marty Walsh has their backs."

Stephenson and IBEW leaders who have worked directly with Walsh for decades in Massachusetts stress that by standing with workers he has spurred economic progress and development, not hindered it.

President Biden has nominated California Labor Commissioner Julie Su as deputy labor secretary. Su is also a solid labor ally and defender of union rights.

EMBRACING A NUCLEAR FUTURE

Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairman Christopher Hanson visited Plant Vogtle in Georgia to meet with IBEW members, including Augusta Local 1579 Business Manager Will Salters, and contractors finishing construction on the Georgia Power facility. Testing is scheduled to commence soon on the first new nuclear reactors to be built in the United States in a generation.



NRC chairman Christopher Hanson, right, met with IBEW members, including Augusta, Georgia, Local 1579 Business Manager Will Salters at Plant Vogtle.



BACKING A NATURAL GAS PIPELINE PROJECT

The Biden administration is supporting a pipeline project before the Supreme Court. The Justice Department is [asking the Court](#) to uphold developer PennEast's authority to use federal eminent domain law to acquire property in New Jersey for the \$1 billion project's route. The pipeline will carry natural gas from Pennsylvania to New Jersey to meet the two states' growing energy demands.

Acting Solicitor General Elizabeth Prelogar argued the federal government has a right to use eminent domain if it has been determined to be in the public interest. Construction has not yet started on the 166-mile pipeline. The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear arguments on the case in late April.

DISMISSING EEOC TRUMP-APPOINTED LAWYER

The Biden administration fired Equal Opportunity Employment Commission general counsel Sharon Gustafson in early March after she refused to step down.

Gustafson had been seen as [hostile to the federal commission's mission](#) of advancing justice and equality in the workplace, investigating discrimination complaints and providing guidance to the federal government on all aspects of equal employment.

Contact Us

IBEW Political/Legislative Affairs Department | p: (202) 728-6046 | e: political@ibew.org
www.ibew.org/political