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The IBEW Seeks Job Opportunities

work is solar-related. Yee is now getting ready for his biggest PV project yet—a 5 megawatt solar array for the city of San Francisco that is expected to require more than 20,000 hours of electrical work.

While not uniform across California, many locals are finding that renewable energy projects have kept their members working, even with the state's unemployment rate topping 12 percent.

The California Difference

Despite fiscal emergencies, drastic budget cuts and a gridlocked legislature, the Golden State has managed to turn green energy from a buzzword into a vibrant new energy sector that is creating good jobs and new businesses, all while reducing the state's carbon footprint.

While casual observers may chalk up the state's success to its sunny climate, those on the ground credit California's combination of innovative political leadership, energetic clean-energy entrepreneurs and the skilled training and manpower provided by the IBEW for making it the leader in alternative energy. "California has fouled up plenty

of things," John Bryson, former chairman of Southern California Edison, told Atlantic magazine's Ronald Brownstein. "But on this set of issues—the clean-energy issues, the kind of things that need to be done in terms of the risk of climate change—I think California is getting it right."

California got an early start in renewable energy legislation. As far back as the 1970s, state leaders aggressively promoted energy efficiency, setting some of the highest standards in the country, while pushing utilities to invest in energy-saving devices and programs.

"Those decisions made more than 20 years ago set us on a course quite different from the rest of the country," said Bernie Kotlier, director of green energy solutions for the California Labor Management Cooperation Committee—a joint partnership between the IBEW and union contractors.

The energy crisis of the early 2000s spurred further efforts to invest in renewable resources, including an ambitious 2001 bill that required the state's three investor-owned utilities to generate 20 percent of their electricity from renewable energy by 2010.

And in 2006, the state's public utilities commission approved the California Solar Initiative, which authorized the state to invest \$3.2 billion in solar power.

"Our relationship with the IBEW and NECA has been critical to opening up new opportunities for us in this area."

— Shelley Keltner, chief executive of Pacific Data Electric

"It's been a bipartisan approach," Kotlier said. "Both Democratic and Republican administrations have backed the efforts."

And it has paid off. The average Californian uses 40 percent less electricity than the average American, which has saved consumers more than \$50 billion in energy bills.

It has also made the state a thriving center for solar power investment with more than \$3 billion flowing into California from 2005 to 2008 alone.

Making Sure Green Jobs Are Good Jobs

Having the third-largest solar market in the world has meant thousands of new jobs for California's electricians. But going after this work has required strong outreach by the IBEW and NECA contractors to let potential commercial and governmental clients know what union electricians can offer.

"Our biggest selling point remains our training," said Santa Rosa Local 551 Membership Development Representative John Lloyd. Local 551 represents six counties north of the Bay Area.

One of those counties, Sonoma, has gone a long way in taking advantage of a 2008 law that allows municipalities to fund the installation of energy-efficient upgrades to existing properties. Local 551 has been successful in attracting small solar start-ups to sign with the IBEW due to its extensive work in the county. Sonoma's seat is the city of Santa Rosa, which was designated as a "Solar American City" by the Department of Energy.

Lloyd sits on the board of directors of a nonprofit organization called Solar Sonoma County, which promotes PV installation.

There is great demand for companies that can perform energy audits and help clients develop plans to save on their electric bills using technologies like motion detectors and advanced lighting controls.

The IBEW has been training its members in these technologies for more than a year and the awarding of a \$5 million Labor Department grant to the state LMCC in January will mean thousands more members will receive training in the field.

"Our relationship with the IBEW and NECA has been critical to opening up new opportunities for us in this area," said Shelley Keltner, chief executive of Pacific Data Electric, a statewide electrical contractor. She says that energy efficiency has become one of her fastest growing areas of work.

Training is only one part of the IBEW's formula for building green market share. The other is marketing.

"We actively build our image," Kotlier said. "We do outreach to all sorts of prospective customers." For example, the LMCC has purchased advertising in specialized business publications and has invited organi-

zations that represent potential customers—from business journalists to school superintendents—to hold their meetings at the 144,000-square-foot Electrical Training Institute in Los Angeles—Local 11 and NECA's state-of-the-art training facility.

"My goal was to rebrand the union and NECA," said Thomas Martinez of the Los Angeles LMCC. "When I first started four years ago, people would wonder why a union was showing up at professional trade shows talking about alternative energy. Now they know."

Kotlier advises IBEW locals in other parts of the country looking to break into the renewable energy field to work with signatory contractors to promote the IBEW's training programs in the wider community. "The green sector is developing a lot faster than many people were expecting," Kotlier said. "Get your members trained and let the world know what you are doing. It's the exposure that allows public and private entities to understand our expertise and that leads to work for our members and contractors." ■

New Interstate Workforce Council Seeks Green Jobs in Rust Belt

IBEW leaders in Ohio and Pennsylvania are the driving force behind the nation's first interstate regional workforce investment board, charged with reigniting interest in their corner of the world.

Warren, Ohio, Local 573 Business Manager Mark Catello, Youngstown, Ohio, Local 64 Business Manager James Burgham and Beaver, Pa., Local 712 Business Manager Frank Telesz Jr., are charter members of the OH-Penn Competitiveness Council, formed Jan 1.

The council covers the Youngstown metropolitan area, which extends from the city of Warren in the north to Mercer County in Pennsylvania.

Made up of educators, local work force investment board directors and local business and labor leaders from both sides of the border, the council is committed to attracting new investment and good jobs back to region—a former center of the steel and auto industry that has been hit hard by the recession.

"We've lost 10,000 jobs due to the decline in the auto industry alone," Catello said.

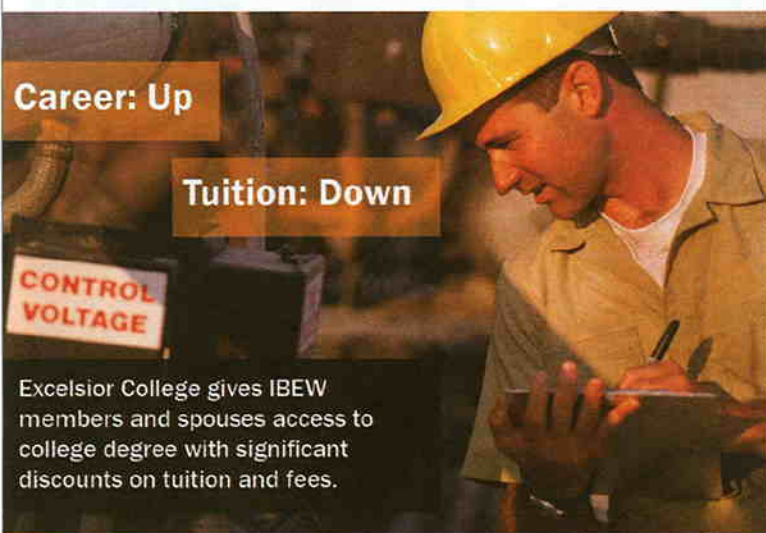
The group is partially funded by the Department of Labor, through grants used to encourage regional economic development.

Council member Sam Giannetti, who is also executive director of work force development for West Central Job Partnership Inc., in New Castle, Pa., attributes the leading role of the IBEW on the council to the union's commitment to training, particularly its emphasis on green power.

"Alternative energy technology will be the cutting edge of developing a new economy and I know the IBEW places a lot of emphasis on clean-energy training," he said.

The group's first course of action is to market the region to high-tech manufacturers, with a focus on companies involved in the green technology sector.

"It's vital that we diversify our economy if we want to bring good jobs back," Catello said. ■



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