

# IBEW Local Union 965 News

## Summer 2011

### FROM PRESIDENT IRWIN

This may be my first letter to the membership without Lori reminding me to submit one. After reading Facebook and receiving many calls, my wife suggested that I write an article on the process of counting contract votes. This may be boring to most but here we go. The President of the local selects the chair of the committee and is given suggestions for the rest of his committee based on union participation. After the committee is selected, they are asked to report to the union hall on the day of the vote. Before the count, the negotiations committee is in charge of the contract vote. When the voting takes place, a judge and teller must verify the members that voted and the count of the number of ballots. They place these ballots and roll call in sealed envelopes with their signatures across the seal. The ballots are either mailed back to the union hall or carried by the negotiating committee member back to the union hall--this is the choice of the judge. Once at the hall, the ballots are secured in our safe. They are not brought out until the day of the vote, when the committee arrives at our office. When counting the votes and verifying members, the committee is in a confined room with glass windows so any member wishing to view the process can watch without disturbing the count. At this time no member of the negotiations committee is present at the union hall and only the ballot committee is in the room with the votes. The committee first verifies names on roll call sheets to a master list provided by the office administrator. This is to make sure our members only vote once. While this is being done the ballots are still sealed in the envelopes. After names are verified, all ballots are emptied into a pile and divided up between the three committee members to count. They are recounted by each member to confirm each count of the committee member. When the count is verified by the committee they then call the Business Manager and President to make them aware of the results.

Now with all of that said we can still improve on our process. I have received a number of questions why the vote count was not shared. What I will promise to our members is that at a future E-Board meeting I will bring up the suggestion to the committee if we are going to hold back the numbers on the vote count that it is communicated to the members from the beginning of the process. I have also received many calls on absentee voting; this is a very controversial item. I have heard numerous times we do not want mailed home ballots, but we want unlimited absentee ballots. This sounds like the best of both worlds. We offer over twenty locations at which to vote. This was over a three week process, but if you were working at WP&L during the vote or medically unable to attend the vote, you could vote absentee with in a twenty-four hour time. This process is decided on by your E-Board and again I see a need for change. One of our members confronted me with a challenge. He is a National Guard member being called up with very limited time and freedom to vote. He was able to make a meeting at a different location but I see a need to change this for our service members.

In closing I must thank our entire Alliant membership that voted and those who questioned the process. Without the right to question processes, improvement will never happen. And again please do not ever think you cannot question the leadership of your local union. If the perception is that we do not listen to our members then we are in trouble as a local.

Fraternally Yours,  
President Rick Irwin

### IN MEMORIAM

The following members of Local Union 965 have passed away in the 2nd quarter of 2011:

Frederick Wirth—Retired-Alliant-South Area—May 4  
Sherman Roeder—Retired-Alliant-Fond du Lac—May 5  
Kenneth Carlson—Retired-Alliant-Rock River--May 25  
Melvin Yasick—Retired-Alliant-Baraboo—June 14  
David Molstad—Retired-Alliant-Dane County—June 30

If we have missed anyone, please let us know. When possible, the obituaries are posted on the IBEW 965 website.

## **UNIT NEWS**

### **Unit 1-CWEC; Alliant: Marion, Wisconsin Rapids**

No Report

### **Unit 3-Alliant: Beaver Dam, Fond du Lac, North Area, Neenah, Ripon**

Here we are again, halfway thru another year and coming into one of the hottest stretches we've seen in awhile. Make sure to hydrate and take plenty of breaks in the shade to prevent heat stroke. We are into the "recall our politicians" timeframe, so everyone that can vote should get out and participate. We need to get worker friendly people back in office. We should also be calling our Congress members and tell them to stop the petty arguing and get our national budget settled before they destroy the economy further. We have a new contract at Alliant; not everyone is happy about the total package but in this economic climate the majority must have been comfortable with it. Hopefully the economy is better when the next one is due.

Mike Broome

Beaver Dam Chief Steward/Unit 3 Chair

### **Unit 5-Everbrite, Village of Sauk City, Village of Prairie du Sac, Alliant: Columbia, Portage, Poynette, Prairie du Sac Hydro**

For the past couple of meetings we have been discussing the yearly solidarity event. As of last night, we have decided to have it on Tuesday, September 13<sup>th</sup> at 4 p.m. As in past years we will be having the monthly meeting and solidarity event at the Portage Rod and Gun Club. The menu hasn't been determined yet, but we will be doing some trap shooting, along with some door prizes. So mark it on your calendar and as always if your children would like to come out and participate, they are more than welcome.

Congratulations to Steve Shanks and Butch Schultz who both have recently retired. They will be missed as they were long time employees at Columbia.

We are looking to have the August monthly meeting down in Prairie Du Sac, possibly at the VFW hall, so look for updates to the meeting notices.

Also discussed was the need to think about where to donate the units' charitable donations for this year. Also, if you checked last month's executive board meeting minutes you would have seen that 2 members from Unit 5 had been drawn for the progressive raffle, but unfortunately neither one was in attendance at a unit meeting so the raffle prize will increase for the next month.

Work Safe!

Bruce Giese

Unit 5 Chairman/Columbia Chief Steward

### **Unit 7-Village of New Glarus, Village of Mazomanie, Stoughton Utilities, Union Financial, Alliant: CSC, Dane County, Madison GO, Monroe**

The last six months have been unlike any we have seen in our lifetimes. Our new Governor led to massive protesting in February. These protests continue on to this day. Agree or disagree with the governor the end result is we are losing 130 of our union brothers and sisters over the next year. Unions have fought long and hard to get fair and equal representation for all, public or private. Many of our unit's brothers and sisters were at the capitol over the past months fighting to maintain these rights. First, thanks to each of you; second, get out and vote. Our wages, our benefits, and our compensation have been earned through our union. We had better be willing to fight to keep it. If we turn our backs, our rights will disappear.

March, April and May found us in heated negotiations with many of our contracts, including several municipals and Alliant Energy. Some of the contacts were ratified; others have not. Some municipals have taken the wait and see approach in an effort to remove the unions from their workplace, while others bargained in good faith, in an effort to help support their local workforce, which are families in their communities.

Alliant's contract was ratified on June 30<sup>th</sup>. Thanks to our negotiating team for the hard work and long hours required during this time.

Let's look forward for the next six months. Get involved in your communities, vote for labor and solidarity when you're voting in the next series of elections. We have membership throughout the state, and our votes will make a difference.

Safety is paramount in our daily lives on and off the job. Take the time to do it safe!  
Stretching - Alliant feels strongly enough in the benefits of stretching that it is willing to give each employee the 15 to 20 minutes each morning to stretch. So, let's "just do it".

Over the next several months I will be asking members to help in the upcoming elections and recall efforts.

In solidarity,  
Mark Schoen – Unit 7 Chairperson

### **PROGRESSIVE RAFFLE DRAWING** **Holly Kaiser - Vice President**

Below are the names that were drawn for the months of April, May and June 2011.

#### **Names Drawn for the April Unit Meetings - \$125.00 Fund**

Jon Weigel (Everbrite)  
Todd Haase (Amherst)  
Duane Moore (ACEC)  
John Bickel (Nelson Dewey)

#### **Names Drawn for the May Unit Meetings - \$150.00 Fund**

Kathleen Decker (Beaver Dam)  
Jason Walter (CWEC)  
Eric Schulz (ACEC)  
Kenneth Weber (Portage)

#### **Names Drawn for the June Unit Meetings - \$175.00 Fund**

Tyler Radl (Mineral Point)  
Mark Witthun (Columbia)  
Jeff Kelly (SA/Beloit)  
Dan Darling (Columbia)

The Progressive Raffle Fund will increase to \$200 for July, 2011. We hope to see you soon at one of the monthly Unit Meetings and good luck! For meeting information, please check your union bulletin board or with your Chief Steward.

### **ORGANIZING BY KEMP**

Organizing right now is tough. The people that we try to organize are scared for their jobs. I cannot blame them at this time with the way the economy is. At this time we have nine municipals on the chopping block. Walker took away all their rights and pretty much abolished the union in the state sector. We do have two leads for organizing. One is a power plant and the other is in manufacturing. If any of you know of some leads, please give me a call at the number below. Thank you.  
Kemp Grutt 608-751-4787

### **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

On Tuesday, July 12, there were primary elections for the six Democratic candidates that are running against the incumbent six Republican State Senators who were targeted for recall this year. The process of voting during these recalls is by no means over yet. There are still more elections scheduled. On Tuesday, July 19, there will be three more elections but now for the Republican candidates running against the three incumbent

Democratic State Senators who are also up against a recall election. They also have primary elections, well at least in two of the cases. Only in two of them because there is more than one Republican candidate running against the Democrat thus causing two primary elections next week. Senator Dave Hansen of Green Bay, who is the incumbent Democrat, only has one opposing Republican candidate so that election on the 19th will be the actual election for that position.

Next month, on August 9<sup>th</sup> it will be the actual election for those candidates who are now running against the incumbent Republican State Senators that were elected on July 12<sup>th</sup>. Then on August 16<sup>th</sup> there will be the election between the two Republican candidates that will be elected on July 19<sup>th</sup> and will face the two incumbent Democratic incumbent State Senators. Sounds confusing; believe me it was supposed to be confusing. It was also supposed to slow down the whole recall process and, because of that, it also added additional tax payer dollars to the recall process. I will say that, as Union members, we need to be aware of what is going on and participate in this pending recall election process.

We need to be aware of the candidates that we select and pick those that care about Wisconsin working families and their well being not corporate greed. We need to make sure we elect candidates that respect us as organized labor and as unionized workers. We have begun to see the detrimental effects of what took place this year and how the Budget Repair bill will start the demise of the quality of life for public sector union workers and to our own Local 965. We need to fight to protect union workers across the state and our own members from further acts that are intentionally aimed at hurting and weakening unions in our state. We need to continue to make sure we elect those state politicians who respect unions and union workers, which means all of us. Thanks for listening and for your help.

Mike Pyne

### **ALLIANT NEGOTIATIONS**

On June 30, 2011 three Union members from different work areas met and counted the ballots for the 2011 tentative agreement with Alliant. When the counting was done, the committee of three determined that the majority of the members that voted accepted the terms of the tentative agreement. Since that time there have been some questions about why the numbers were not shared after the count was completed and I will address that in this article. I know under a separate article, President Irwin will be addressing the voting process so I will not go in depth on the process. I do wish to point out that only one ballot that was cast did not get counted. I have been informed that the ballot had both yes and no checked on the ballot so it was voided. All other ballots were counted. Now let's spend some time discussing a couple reasons for not sharing the vote count.

**Reason # 1 not to share the vote count:** The Company has requested the numbers.

This contract is no different than other contract vote; the company requested the numbers for the vote. From the Union's standpoint, if the company requests something from the Union there has to be a reason. It is my belief that the company first wants to know the number of people voting. If there is a low voter turnout that may translate to a lack of interest or solidarity which the company would use in future negotiations. If they know how many yes or no votes, they can also use that to their advantage. As an example, if the vote was close, they may know that they need to work a strategy of targeting a particular work group that maybe would get them to support with a yes vote. On the other hand if the vote was not close, the company may say they could give less and still get it passed.

**Reason #2 not to share the vote count:** It is the Unions information.

Anytime the Union has information that it can use to strategize for future negotiations, it is to our advantage. Similar to reason #1, we want to keep information away from the employer. When the Union has this information, we are able to use phrases in future negotiations such as "the 2011 contract passed only because of the economic conditions at that time – that's not going to fly again based on what we saw in the vote outcome in 2011". Or we can comment "the members came out in 2011 and voted this in and unless we do something better, they will certainly show up and vote this down". These are just a couple of illustrations on how knowing the voting information can help make a case while only the Union knows if there really was a big turnout or if the contract passed overwhelmingly or just by a narrow margin.

Now back to discussion about the decision to not share the vote count. In 2007 I was elected Business manager while I was involved in the 2007 negotiations. I had very little to do with preparations for that negotiations as our previous Business Manager, Shawn Reents, did the negotiations preparation. At that time we also had a different Union President, Mike Pyne. While I was finding my way as Business Manager back in 2007, a lot of work on strategies was discussed. Most of those strategies were too late to implement for 2007 and we hoped to move them forward in 2011. Among them was the need to get out in front of the members to hear what is being said and allowing for two way conversation. This would not take the place of the negotiations surveys but rather would another method for communication.

In late 2010 we held listening sessions at the various work locations throughout Alliant territory. Some of those listening sessions were heavily attended and others had very little participation. At those meetings we opened up for discussion on a variety of topics including a discussion on not sharing the vote count. While not all meetings went down that road, there was no question that we had decided long before a vote was to be taken that we were not sharing the results other than yes or no. The committee that was asked to count the ballots was informed of this before they counted the ballots. In other words this was a strategy decision made long before the vote was taken or counted which we believe helps the Union in the future.

A couple more of the changes that were implemented due to comments over the years were also utilized in these negotiations. We held regional negotiations update meeting each two weeks during negotiations. We held regional explanation meetings prior to holding any voting meetings to give people the opportunity to get questions answered before attending the voting meetings. We summarized information for the voting meeting to allow people to come in and vote quickly if they wanted while we were available to answer all questions before voting for those who still had questions.

As we move forward toward the 2014 negotiations, we will continue to seek comments from all members about how to improve the process. We welcome and read all comments on any topics. All of are the Union and together we can achieve.

Tony Bartels  
Business Manager & Financial Secretary

**2011 IBEW 965 Scholarship Winners**  
**Vice President Kaiser**

This year's winners of the 965 Scholarships are:

LeeAnna Patoka, daughter of Mike Patoka – Service Tech – Amherst Junction

Bastian Mackenzie, son of Bill Mackenzie – Lead Engineering Tech – Fond du Lac

Shane Moilanen, son of Jim Moilanen – Engineering Tech – Baraboo

Kali Jahn, daughter of Jeff Jahn – Local Rep – Stoughton.

Congratulations to all our winners and all of the students that took the time to apply for this scholarship. We had an excellent group of students apply and wish everyone a successful future.

One of the criteria required when applying is that the 965 parent of the student must submit a short essay on *“How has being a union member provided you and your family with values and opportunities? Please explain how you have been able to instill those values in your son or daughter.”* Below are a couple of the essays that were submitted....

My name is James Moilanen and I have been a member of the IBEW since 2007. Previously, I was in a salaried, non-managerial position with Alliant Energy. After many years of continual down-sizing (1993, 1998 and 2000), an opportunity arose and after weighing the pros and cons of switching careers, made what has been the great decision to become a union employee.

As I went through my apprenticeship, I struggled to balance the demands of family and work while preparing myself for the journeyman's test. There were times when it was very tough for all my family, but with their help and much hard work, I've succeeded and passed the exam one year ago.

My hometown is Flint, Michigan, a town filled with union history which I have proudly shared with my son. By participating in our recent rallies supporting our state's union brothers' collective bargaining rights, I am showing my children my belief in the IBEW, all unions and our future.

I am proud to be a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.



Dear IBEW,

With the times of uncertainties in our country it is more important than ever to stand together. This is why I believe that a Union is a necessity. We as an organization have to work to protect the wages and benefits of the common worker. The union has done this in the past and will continue to in the future.

Union workers will typically have better wages which will help provide for their children's schooling, and a better live. The things that are needed for the middle class to survive. They have provided a good income in a bad economy.

WITH OUT IT we would starve.

Sincerely,

Timothy C. Sichler

**See you at the Solidarity Picnic  
Saturday, July 23  
Union Office  
Beginning at 11:30 a.m.**



Per Section XI of the Working Rules re: Organizing: Local 965 will give a reward to any current member in good standing with the IBEW and Local 965, who secures a person who is working in a non-union work environment at the time, who will be willing to take an active role in assisting Local 965 in organizing said work group. The amount of the reward to be presented shall follow the guidelines of: 1-6 people= Fifty dollars (\$50.00) cash; 7-12 people=One Hundred dollars (\$100.00) cash; 13 or greater=Two Hundred and Fifty dollars (\$250.00) cash. The reward will be paid to a current Local 965 member, (excluding all Constitutional Officers and Business Representatives of Local 965), when the determination is made by the National Labor Relations Board or the WERC to recognize Local 965 as the sole representative bargaining agent of the non-union work environment. The Local 965 Business Manager, along with the Local 965 Organizer, must approve all targets in order to qualify for a reward. The Local 965 Business Manager, along with the Local 965 Organizer, will make the determination that there was sufficient and positive work and/or assistance for the Local Union to warrant a reward to be given to the current Local 965 member.

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