

**Written Testimony of President Lonnie R. Stephenson,
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
Before the Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives**

The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) represents approximately 750,000 active members and retirees who work in a wide variety of skilled occupations including: utilities, construction, telecommunications, broadcasting, manufacturing, railroads, and government. On behalf of the IBEW membership, I appreciate the opportunity to submit this written testimony for your Committee's consideration.

Often when people think of infrastructure, they think of roads, bridges, or airports. But perhaps even more important is our electrical infrastructure. The energy industry has changed in so many ways, but too much of our existing infrastructure is still stuck in the 20th century. The configuration of our current grid, which largely functions on a localized or statewide basis, just isn't appropriate to meet our current energy needs. We need a truly national grid and new transmission lines that can safely and reliably transfer power – including renewables like wind and solar – from energy rich regions to those parts of the country most in need.

In 2014, IBEW Utility Department Director, James Hunter, testified before the Senate Energy and Natural Resource Committee regarding the reliability and security of the United States electric grid.¹ While his testimony primarily focused on the impact of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) regulations on generation, his assessment of demand increasing remains true. The U.S. Energy Information Administration recently issued its Annual Energy Outlook for 2017.² Energy consumption is set to increase 5-11% between 2016 and 2040.³ This projection underscores the need for new transmission projects that will cross multiple jurisdictions and state lines. In order to assure these important projects are completed in a timely manner, unnecessary red tape must be eliminated from the siting and permitting process.

It is absolutely critical that electrical infrastructure projects are completed by highly skilled, thoroughly trained, licensed workers. IBEW members in both the construction and utility industries complete extensive training programs. Our members in the construction branch complete up to 10,000 hours of on the job and classroom training in privately funded, nationwide apprenticeship programs. These programs are sponsored by the electrical training ALLIANCE, a joint effort

¹James L. Hunter, Testimony: *Keeping the lights on- are we doing enough to ensure the reliability and security of the U.S. Electric Grid*, April 10, 2014.

² U.S. Energy Information Administration, Annual Energy Outlook 2017 with projections to 2050 (Jan. 2017), [http://www.eia.gov/outlooks/aeo/pdf/0383\(2017\).pdf](http://www.eia.gov/outlooks/aeo/pdf/0383(2017).pdf).

³ *Id.* at 4.

between the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) and the IBEW and are designated as Registered Apprenticeships through the United States Department of Labor.⁴ The electrical training ALLIANCE program is the largest apprenticeship of its kind. An astounding 350,000 apprentices have completed the program, becoming journeyman since its inception years ago. The knowledge and skills obtained through this world-class training gives IBEW members the ability to perform at the highest level for our NECA contractor partners and consumers on each and every project. The electrical training ALLIANCE website contains more information on the program. In addition, I encourage each of you to visit one of the training centers. There are around 300, located across the entire U.S., and their doors are always open to you. It is important to note that the continuation of this successful training partnership is dependent upon opportunities for continuous employment, like infrastructure investments, both private and publically funded. As discussed in my oral testimony⁵, the IBEW's Code of Excellence (COE) program is an example of the IBEW's full commitment to working with our employer partners to provide on-the-job excellence every working day. The COE is a solid commitment from our leadership, members, and contractors to customers that we will consistently provide the best value product. IBEW members will

⁴ electrical training ALLIANCE, *About Us*, <http://electricaltrainingalliance.org/AboutUs> (Feb. 2017).

⁵ Lonnie R. Stephenson, Testimony: *Modernizing Energy and Electricity Delivery Systems: Challenges and Opportunities to Promote Infrastructure Improvement and Expansion*, Feb. 15, 2017.

continually perform their work safely and efficiently, with a strong sense of pride and ownership. The COE program has been highly effective, and as a result has been implemented across all IBEW represented industries. I have attached a PowerPoint with more information that I believe highlights some of the benefits of this successful program.⁶

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on this important topic. I look forward to working with each of you on infrastructure investments that result in job creation and a more safe, more reliable electrical grid.

⁶ International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Your Power Professionals in Electrical Construction, 2017 presentation.