



The Current

News from IBEW Local 1837

Fall 2021

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers - Maine & New Hampshire

IBEW Local #1837 Int'l Convention Delegates Selected

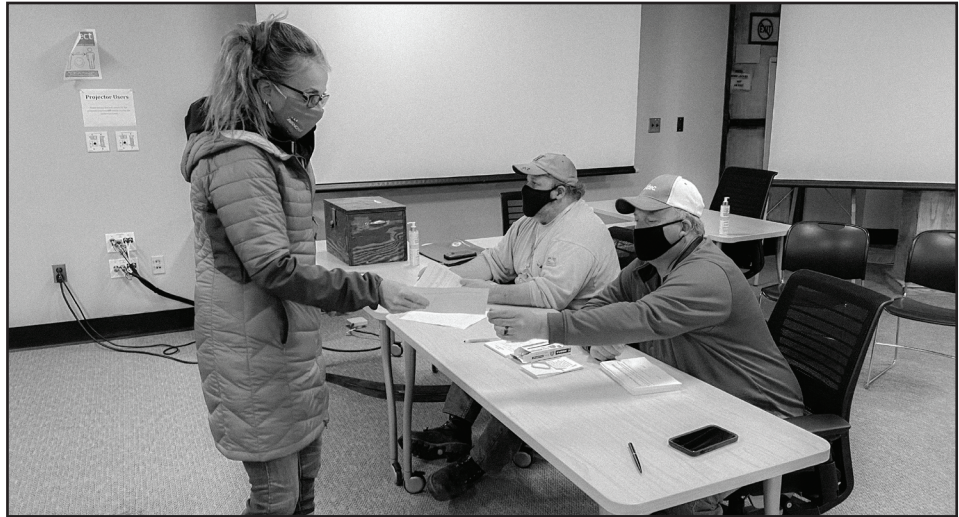
The following members of IBEW Local #1837 have been nominated and selected to serve as delegates to the International Brotherhood of Electrical Worker's 40th International Convention in Chicago: IBEW 1837 Business Manager Tony Sapienza, IBEW 1837 President Michelle Crocker, IBEW 1837 Organizer/Business Representative Matt Beck, IBEW 1837 Vice Pres. Bob McNeff, E-Board Rep Kitty Kilroy, and retiree Bill Tarallo. Since the number of nominees was equal to the number of delegates for our Local, there will not be an election held for those seats.

The International Executive Council, in consultation with International President Stephenson and International Secretary-Treasurer Cooper, voted unanimously to postpone the 40th IBEW Convention due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 40th IBEW Convention was scheduled to commence on August 30, 2021, but has now been postponed to Monday, May 9 through Friday, May 13, 2022. Nomination and election of International Officers have also been postponed to May 2022 and will take place at the Convention. Delegates — more than 1,900 of them — will represent 725,000 members and retirees from more than 900 locals.

On February 16, 2021, the IEC passed a resolution calling for a vote of the Local Unions on whether to amend the IBEW Constitution to add a new provision — Article XXVII,

Story continued on page 5

Contract Round-up: Agreements Ratified at CMP, NextEra and Kittery Water District's First Contract



Turnout was high throughout the state for the Central Maine Power contract vote in May.

Central Maine Power Members Ratify 4-Year Contract

IBEW members working at Central Maine Power voted to approve a new collective bargaining agreement with guaranteed wage increases and annual bonus payments, and without significant concessions of any kind. Voting took place at 15 different locations throughout the state on Wednesday, May 5th. The contract takes effect immediately and runs through April 30, 2025.

“The ratification of the new 4-year contract agreement with Central Maine Power is a significant step in the right direction for our members and for Maine’s largest electric utility,” said IBEW 1837 Business Manager Tony Sapienza. “After months of negotiations we were able to come to an agreement that the negotiating committee and the Union leadership could recommend to our members. Our members are proud of the important work they do serving CMP’s many thousands of customers and this agreement demonstrates that the company recognizes the value of our commitment to them.”

The Union and the Company met a total of 15 times in March and April at CMP’s General Office in Augusta with both sides limiting the number of people at the bargaining table as a COVID-related precaution. The Union side brought in a limited number of other members beyond the core negotiating committee for one or two days at a time to gain the benefit of their specific knowledge and experience.

Union negotiators sought wage adjustments across the board and presented detailed data when and where it was available to bolster their arguments.

Story continued on page 2

Contracts Ratified by IBEW 1837 Members

Story continued from page 1

Ultimately, all job classifications received at least a single 2% wage adjustment prior to the general wage increases of 3% per year in each of the four years. Some job classifications, including First Class Lineworkers, received larger wage adjustments as the data conclusively proved they were underpaid and the Company found it increasingly difficult to attract and retain people in those positions.

The Company initially proposed eliminating sick time “banks” for employees hired prior to 2014, switching to bi-weekly pay, changing some permanent holidays and instituting penalties for those who fail to meet a minimum response level for call-outs. Those proposals were eventually dropped. Union members will continue to have the same health insurance and sick time benefits without any changes.

“We appreciate the company’s willingness to make wage adjustments in all job classifications while leaving the benefits our members have earned largely intact,” Brother Sapienza said. “While it’s clear from the feedback we’ve received from our members that those wage adjustments didn’t satisfy everybody, we believe that we can continue having a productive dialogue with the company about these and other issues moving forward.”

In addition to Business Manager Sapienza, Assistant Business Manager Renee Gilman led the Union Negotiating Team with retired Business Manager Dick Rogers serving as a Senior Advisor. They were joined by Derek Willette, Terri MacDonald, Michelle Crocker and Greg Fortin. Other members of the team who were only able to sit at the table for a portion of the talks because of COVID restrictions included Eric Lunt, Cale Dyer, Dan Washburn, Troy Ellis, April Barnes, Tim Gordon and Todd Hatch.

More than 675 members of IBEW Local #1837 at CMP serve 646,000 customers from Kittery to Jackman and operate from nine service centers across Maine. They comprise the largest bargaining unit of the Local. The contract covers field and support workers in the line departments, meter departments, substations departments, customer service representatives, area and systems dispatchers, engineers, programmers, communications center and field offices, GIS and CADD technicians, offices services personnel, technical services representatives, and a variety of other support personnel.

NextEra Members Approve Extension

IBEW 1837 members at Wyman Station have narrowly approved a 3-year contract extension with modest wage increases each year. Members will receive a total wage increase of 4.49% over the term of the agreement and a \$750 signing bonus. All the other terms and conditions of the current contract agreement will remain in effect through October 30, 2024.

“I’m grateful to our Chief Steward Travis York, Assistant Business Manager Renee Gilman and former Business Manager Dick Rogers for their hard work in negotiating this agreement,” said Tony Sapienza, IBEW 1837 Business Manager. “We know from the close vote that not everybody is satisfied with this agreement but it was a substantial improvement from the Company’s initial offer and we believe it was the best agreement we could get at this time.”

The Wyman plant, a local landmark located on Cousins Island in Yarmouth, was built on a 122-acre site in 1957.

The large oil-fired 608.5-megawatt number 4 generator was added in 1978.

Once a base load plant, Wyman Station is now an on-call peak load facility that runs infrequently, usually during prolonged hot or cold spells. Much of the plant’s current income is obtained through capacity payments. In exchange for those payments, they have an obligation to be ready to run the plant when called on to do so. Wyman is owned and operated by NextEra Energy Resources and employs about 20 members of IBEW 1837, down from more than 50 when it ran more often. Owned by Central Maine Power until it was forced to sell it after deregulation of the electric power industry, it takes its name from former CMP President William F. Wyman, son of the company’s founder.



IBEW 1837 Assistant Business Manager Renee Gilman, Business Manager Tony Sapienza and Chief Steward Travis York reviewed the list of eligible members during the contract extension vote in August.

Kittery Water District Approves 1st Contract

2020 was a rough year but at least one good thing came out of it: Workers at the Kittery Water District overwhelmingly ratified their first contract with IBEW Local #1837. The 15 workers at the water utility include office staff, filtration plant workers, laborers, meter readers, service technicians and others.

“We’re grateful to negotiating team members Linda Johnson, Matthew Crosby, and Brandon Woods for the time and effort they put into making this a good first contract,” said IBEW 1837 Organizer and Business Representative Matt Beck. “The contract guarantees that they will be able to maintain the good wages and benefits they currently enjoy while making other substantive improvements as well.”

Although the employees at Kittery Water District had been in IBEW Local #1837 through most of the 1990’s, both sides at the bargaining table approached the negotiations as if this was the first contract agreement for them. IBEW 1837 Business Manager Tony Sapienza and attorney Jeff Young also participated in the bargaining along with Beck and IBEW 1837 notetaker Sue Ekola.

The 2-year contract agreement includes 2.5% wage increases in each year and maintains 100% health insurance coverage paid for by the Kittery Water District. Other improvements included new requirements by management to give employees advance notice for schedule changes and improving opportunities to earn overtime pay. It also instituted a grievance and arbitration process for any violations of the agreement.

The employees were able to take advantage of a new Maine state law introduced by Rep. Mike Sylvester of Portland that recognizes unions if a majority of municipal workers in a bargaining unit sign cards stating that they would like to be represented by the union. This allows workers to avoid a drawn out election processes after they’ve already decided to collectively bargain a contract with their employer.

The Kittery Water District serves Kittery, Kittery Point, Eliot and a portion of York, Maine. They provide drinking water to 12,000 people in addition to the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, their largest governmental customer.



Kittery Water District Office Manager Linda Johnson voted to ratify the contract last December. Every member of the bargaining unit took the time to cast their ballot.

Quick Notes and Announcements

Unit Meetings Schedule Revised and Some Locations Changed Due to COVID-19

Many Unit meetings have resumed after a summer break. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the relocation, postponement or cancellation of some meetings. While we try to find safe places where we can meet, please contact your steward, the union office, or log on to www.ibew1837.org and check our website calendar before driving to a meeting. IBEW 1837 is conducting some meetings online using Zoom. Union staff is available to meet on an as-needed basis where meetings are cancelled. You can view and download an updated schedule at ibew1837.org/meetings.

Contract Negotiations Underway at WGME-TV and Starting Soon at WABI-TV

Bargaining has begun on a new contract at WGME-TV in Portland between the Union and Sinclair Broadcasting Group. The top issues among the members who attended pre-negotiation meetings were wages and staffing concerns. Housing costs in Maine’s largest city and a company-wide wage freeze have caused tremendous stress on the 40 members who work behind the scenes producing news, commercials and other content for the CBS affiliate as well as the local FOX station. In Bangor, negotiations are starting soon at CBS affiliate WABI-TV with wages a likely top issue there, too.

Please Keep Your Union Info Up-to-Date

New mailing address, email address or phone number? Please let us know! You can contact the union office with any updates by calling 207-623-1030 or email: union@ibew1837.org.

In Memorium: Mark A. St. Jarre, 1963 - 2021

We were deeply saddened to learn of the sudden passing of Brother St. Jarre in late August. Mark was a Senior Production Tech for NextEra at Wyman Station. Our thoughts are with his family and friends during this difficult time.

IBEW 1837 Joins Effort to Save Brookfield Dams on the Kennebec

IBEW 1837 has joined Brookfield Renewables and the Kennebec River Alliance in a bid to prevent the removal of dams on the Kennebec River where our members work generating electricity. A proposal to amend Maine's Kennebec River Management Plan and remove at least two and eventually as many as four dams has been withdrawn. That apparent victory for dam supporters was just one step in a complicated and hard to follow licensing process.

First, Maine's Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) said removing the Lockwood Dam in Waterville and the Shawmut Dam in Fairfield would allow 99% of endangered Atlantic salmon to move upriver to spawn and create new recreational opportunities and economic development. But others noted that Brookfield's plan would allow 96% of salmon to make it upstream and removal of the dams would negatively impact recreational opportunities that the dams provide, hurt the local economy, cause tax increases in local communities and lead to the loss of good-paying union jobs.

IBEW 1837 member Ed Goodale testified at a public hearing in June about what he's learned after working on Maine rivers for nearly 33 years.

"The people doing these jobs truly care about their river system and feel more like a steward of the river than just a hydro tech," Goodale said. "Brookfield and their employees have proven they can and will operate their generating stations both safely and environmentally friendly. All work is done with safety and the environment in mind first. Brookfield and their employees maintain the motto of doing the right thing."

Maine DMR eventually dropped efforts to enact their plan for the entire river after Brookfield filed a lawsuit saying the agency was overstepping its authority.

In July, in a draft environmental assessment as part of the relicensing process of the Shawmut Dam, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) found the salmon can be protected without dam removal. They went further in stating that dam removal is not a reasonable alternative and that Brookfield's plan to construct an upstream fish lift and downstream passage improvements would be sufficiently protective of target species. FERC also supported Brookfield's proposal for maintenance of recreation amenities for the 40-year license term.

IBEW 1837 and the Maine AFL-CIO filed comments supporting the findings of the FERC draft assessment and the Brookfield licensing plan. The impoundment of water the dam provides the industrial water supply necessary to operate the Sappi Somerset Mill, where about hundreds of union members work in an integrated pulping and papermaking operation making coated freesheet papers, grease-proof packaging papers and bleached chemical pulp.

In August, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) indicated that they were likely to deny Brookfield's application for a water quality certification, relying on the earlier MDMR findings. Without the water quality permit, FERC may not renew Brookfield's license to operate the Shawmut Dam. Brookfield withdrew its DEP application and indicated its intention to file a new application within 60 days that would give greater weight to the FERC draft review. The DEP would have a year after receiving the application to make a decision.

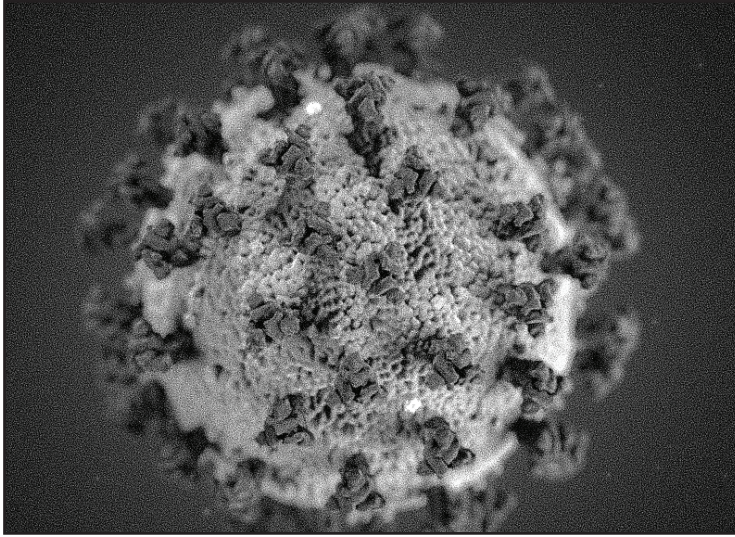
That caused Maine Senate President Troy Jackson, D-Allagash, and Maine House Speaker Ryan Fecteau, D-Biddeford, to propose legislation that would establish "reasonable standards" for permitting and operation of dams in the state, giving the Maine Legislature a greater voice in the process. The new legislation prompted Governor Janet Mills to issue a statement saying "People outside the (Sappi) mill, including politicians and the dam owners, have wrongly suggested that the state is requiring the removal of the Shawmut Dam, going so far as to employ scare tactics and to suggest that my administration wants to close the mill. Let me be clear: this is untrue. It is not necessary to remove the Shawmut Dam in order to allow fish to pass through successfully."

IBEW 1837 will continue to work closely with Brookfield and the members of the Kennebec River Alliance to protect the jobs of our members and the economic and recreational vitality of the surround communities.



IBEW 1837 members Josh Turner and Cory Dunbar work at Brookfield's Weston Station in Skowhegan. Photo: Miranda Kessel

COVID-19 Rules Vary from One Company to Another



COVID-19 Graphic: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Companies with employees represented by our Union have developed and revised policies related to safety protocols for COVID-19 since the early days of the pandemic and in recent months with the spread of the Delta Variant. Before the introduction of emergency use authorization vaccines, most of the policies concerned vehicle sharing, masking, testing, working remotely and maintaining 6-ft. social distancing indoors at company facilities. With Pfizer, Moderna and J&J vaccines readily available for anybody 12 and older willing to get “jabbed,” those policies have evolved and vary widely from company-to-company.

Some companies have offered cash incentives for those employees willing to prove they have been vaccinated while requiring regular COVID-19 testing and/or masking at work for those unwilling to share their proof of vaccination.

IBEW 1837 has yet to challenge any COVID-19 guidelines or requirements implemented by any of our companies. Our attorney has been closely following the evolving court cases and legal opinions on this issue while advising us about how they might affect the rights of our members. We have regularly responded to questions from our members about this issue and will continue do so.

Just before this issue of *The Current* went to press, President Biden announced that the Department of Labor would issue new rules requiring vaccines or weekly tests for employees at companies with more than 100 employees. This will potentially affect many of our members but could be subject to court challenges. We will closely follow the rules’ impact.

HPPA privacy protections are not as broad as many people think. The HPPA Privacy Rule protects how a healthcare provider or health insurance company shares information with employers. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: “Your employer can ask you for a doctor’s note or other health information if they need the information for sick leave, workers’ compensation, wellness programs, or health insurance. However, if your employer asks your health care provider directly for information about you, your provider cannot give your employer the information without your authorization unless other laws require them to do so. Generally, the Privacy Rule applies to the disclosures made by your health care provider, not the questions your employer may ask.”

The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) may provide additional privacy protections, reasonable accommodations and rights to employees in limited circumstances.

In the meantime, it continues to be important and required that you follow all safety protocols put in place by your employer. It is their right and obligation to take the steps necessary to provide a safe workplace for you and your co-workers. Required wearing of masks for vaccinated or unvaccinated employees is a widely used safety protocol that has been determined to be reasonable with very limited medical exceptions.

IBEW Local #1837 International Convention Delegates Selected

Story continued from page 1

Section 1(d) – allowing the IEC, in consultation with the International President and International Secretary-Treasurer, to make temporary amendments to the IBEW Constitution if circumstances beyond the control of the IBEW make it impracticable, impossible, inadvisable, or unsafe to conduct the business of the IBEW. That resolution passed by a vote of the Local Unions 564 to 71. On April 20, 2021, the IEC acting pursuant to its authority under new Article XXVII, Section 1(d), made necessary temporary amendments to the IBEW Constitution to enable the Convention to be postponed.



**40TH IBEW INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION
POSTPONED TO MAY 9-13, 2022**

Personal Financial Health of Union Members Bolsters Union's Strength During Contract Negotiations

If you owned coastal property in Maine or New Hampshire and weather forecasters said that a hurricane was barreling up the Atlantic Coast, you would probably batten down the hatches, stock up on groceries and flashlight batteries, hope for the best, and prepare for the worst. If the hurricane passed us by, well, you could still make good use of those supplies. If we took a direct hit from Mother Nature, you'd be all set to ride out the storm.

By the same token, when the forecast calls for upcoming contract bargaining at one of our represented companies, members ought to consider getting their financial house in order . . . just in case negotiations turn stormy. All too many of us live from paycheck-to-paycheck, and the threat of missing even a single week's pay can make some of the most resolute union members think twice about the impact loss of wages might have on them and their families.

Unfortunately, negotiators at our represented companies know this. They know that housing costs and prices have been going up and hitting us in the wallet and pocketbook. They are tuned in to conversations among our members and know that many of us could not afford to go on strike.

Nobody on either side of the table - the Union or the Company - wants to see a strike. While your Union will always do everything possible to avoid such an outcome of the negotiating process, the strike must remain a credible threat when we are unable to reach an agreement with the party across the table. In most cases, the ability to withhold our labor gives us tremendous leverage.

One of the best things you can do to show support for your Union Contract Negotiating Team - and help yourself at the same time - is to put together a financial cushion or nest egg fund in case you need to fall back on it during a work stoppage. Even if negotiations at your company are not coming up soon, don't wait! Get started now!

Consider setting up a separate Rainy Day or Strike Fund savings account and work toward socking away enough money to last you and your family for three months without a paycheck. And we're talking about all of your expenses: home mortgage, car loans, household bills, groceries - everything. Don't worry about saving for all three months. Save for one day at a time.

And you don't have to start big at first. Even saving up pocket change every day in a jar can add up to hundreds of dollars over the course of a year. Or instead of going out for lunch, brown bag it most of the time. Just make sure that you deposit the savings in your Rainy Day or Strike Fund savings account on a regular basis.

Remember, by improving your financial health, you can help strengthen your Union during contract negotiations. Hopefully, you will never need to dip into these savings during a labor dispute. And someday, when you retire, you can use it to treat yourself to something special. Just think about it . . . a boat . . . a vacation . . . a camp on a lake . . . sounds like fun!



*Union Made
Face Masks
For Sale*

While They Last



\$10
includes shipping



*Red, 100% Cotton
Premium Quality
3-Ply Mask
Send \$10 check to the Union
Office and include "Mask" in
the memo line on the check.*

**IBEW Local #1837
16 Old Winthrop Road
Manchester, ME 04351**

Maine Governor Vetoes Consumer-Owned Utility Bill



The Maine House of Representatives failed to override the veto by Governor Janet Mills of a consumer-owned utility bill 68 - 65, far short of the necessary 2/3 margin. That means that voters will not see a referendum question creating Pine Tree Power on the ballot this fall. If approved by voters, Pine Tree Power would have replaced Central Maine Power and Versant Power with a consumer-owned utility. The bill's proponents pledged to collect enough signatures to place the question before voters in November 2022.

When a prior version of the legislation was first introduced in January 2019, IBEW 1837 was committed to participating in the process to ensure that employees and ratepayers' interests were at the forefront of any proposed legislation. After a careful and painstaking review of the final legislation by our legal counsel, the Union decided to come out against the bill. Of the utmost concern was the possible loss of private sector collective bargaining rights guaranteed under the National Labor Relations Act if the new utility is classified as a public employer.

"We're pleased that Gov. Mills has decided to veto LD 1708, the Pine Tree Power bill, and that the Legislature has sustained her veto," IBEW 1837 Business Manager Tony Sapienza said. "While we appreciate and recognize efforts made by lead sponsor Rep. Seth Berry to craft legislation that would be good for our members and Maine ratepayers, the change to a consumer-owned utility would bring with it tremendous risks and uncertainty. Although Maine's investor-owned electric utilities are far from perfect, we're committed to working with them to improve service for Maine's ratepayers and to making those utilities better places to work for our members"

In order to place a referendum creating a consumer-owned utility on next year's ballot, the number of valid signatures required would be 10 percent of the total votes cast for governor in the last gubernatorial election, a difficult but not impossible task.

In recent years, Central Maine Power has been criticized for their storm response and billing issues. CMP's pursuit of the New England Clean Energy Connect project to bring in power from Hydro Quebec is deeply unpopular with some voters.

Supporters say a consumer-owned utility would put the interests of ratepayers ahead of corporate investors, eventually leading to lower electric rates and more investment. Opponents say it is essentially a government takeover, would likely lead to less investment in the electric grid, put Maine \$13.5 billion in debt, and would end up making IBEW workers public employees, with fewer collective bargaining rights and subject to furloughs and deferred wages that other state employees have faced.

If the measure makes it to the ballot and is passed by voters, CMP and Versant have threatened lawsuits that would likely delay the initiative for years if it is allowed to proceed at all.

NH Defeats So-Called "Right-to-Work" Again

In a tremendous victory for working people and their unions in the Granite State, the New Hampshire House of Representatives soundly defeated "Right to Work" legislation on June 3 by a vote of 199-175. That was followed by a 197-178 vote to indefinitely postpone the bill, effectively killing it until at least 2023. The morning of the vote, hundreds of Union members carrying "Vote No" signs lined the streets leading to the NH Sportsplex in Bedford where the session was held.

"This legislative victory was only possible because of the great work done by members of IBEW 1837 and other unions," said IBEW Local 1837 Organizer and Business Representative Matt Beck. "They contacted their elected representatives to urge them to defeat Right-to-Work, a bill which proponents consider just a first step to eliminating unions altogether."

The Right-to-Work fight garnered national attention from corporate interests and the Virginia-based National Right to Work Committee after Democrats lost control of the New Hampshire House and Senate last November. Gov. Chris Sununu had supported Right-to-Work in the past and indicated he would sign it if it reached his desk.

When Senate Bill 61, Right-to-Work was introduced, organizers went to work to identify pro-labor Republicans who could help defeat the bill in the Senate or House. After Senate Bill 61 narrowly passed the State Senate 13-11, the focus was squarely on the House and the virtual public hearing in the House Labor Committee that was held on Zoom.

Opponents testifying or signing-in opposed to Right-to-Work easily outnumbered those in favor. Prior to the hearing, it was announced that just over 200 people from New Hampshire had signed on in support of the bill on the NH General Court website while more than 1,700 had signed on in opposition to it, a margin of more than 8 to 1 against Right-to-Work.

One of the last people to testify against the bill at the House hearing was Pat Moran, a Troubleshooter for Eversource NH.

"I feel strongly that Senate Bill 61, the so-called Right to Work bill does not belong in New Hampshire. I believe this is a means to break unions," Brother Moran said. "The name itself is a lie. Right to Work doesn't give anyone any rights or any work. It is meant to hurt unions financially."



I.B.E.W. Local #1837
 16 Old Winthrop Road, Suite 1
 Manchester, ME 04351
Return service requested

NON PROFIT ORG.
 U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
 PORTLAND, ME
 PERMIT #64

IBEW Local 1837

www.ibew1837.org



IBEW Local 1837



@IBEW1837



IBEW1837



Flores / UCS



The Current

Newsletter of IBEW Local 1837
 207-623-1030 or 603-743-1652
www.ibew1837.org

President - Michelle Crocker
Vice President - Bob McNeff
Recording Secretary - Dyan Dubord
Treasurer - Donna Raymond
Business Manager - Tony Sapienza
Assistant Business Manager - Renee Gilman
Business Rep. / Current Editor - Matt Beck

*Inside this Fall 2021 issue of **The Current**:*

IBEW 1837 Members Selected as Convention Delegates

*Contracts Ratified for Central Maine Power,
 NextEra & Kittery Water District*

IBEW 1837 Joins Effort to Save Brookfield Dams

COVID-19 Rules Vary from One Company to Another

Consumer Utility and “Right-to-Work” Bills Defeated