



INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS LOCAL 17

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James Shaw

Business Manager & Financial Secretary

September 18, 2024

Commissioners,

My name is Ryan Olechnowicz. I am an Assistant Business Manager at the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 17. IBEW Local 17 represents over 4,200 men and women that work primarily in the electrical utility sector. These are the men and women that tirelessly build and maintain the power lines, substations, streetlights, traffic signals, and trim the trees on the grid for southeast Michigan. Our organization was first chartered in Detroit in 1892, around the same time the first grid was being built. Over the past 132 years the electrical industry has provided countless men and women from all communities employment that offers competitive wages, provides quality healthcare, and retirement benefits. All the tools that someone needs to live a secure middle-class lifestyle and retire with dignity at a reasonable age. We hope this continues for workers of the next several generations. Electricity has gone from a novelty and luxury of the past to an essential part of everyone's life and the economy. Our current grid has begun to show its age over the past few years, with severe weather causing greater damage than ever before. Many communities current infrastructure is approaching the end of its useful life. The growing demand for electricity from electric vehicles, data centers, and manufacturing will require significant portions of the grid to be rebuilt. To be environmentally responsible, we must continue to seek out clean sources of energy. The required investment is immense, as much as 9 billion dollars is planned to be invested in the first five years alone. The sustained benefits from this investment will also be immense for the community. Grid upgrades including modern technology will mean far fewer outages for customers during severe weather. These upgrades also have the added benefit of restoring customers much faster with system automation. As a labor organization, worker safety is always one of our top concerns. The modernization of the grid will also mean a safer work environment for utility workers and the public. This investment will also mean career opportunities for people in our local communities. Opportunities not only within the field of electrical work, but also in the future manufacturing, data, EV, and battery plants that will come to our region if we have a world class reliable electrical system. We believe in this investment plan that will improve reliability and prepare us to support the growing electrical needs with clean, safe energy. We hope the commission will see value in this plan for the people of these communities, and the perils in delaying the ability to make that investment.

Respectfully,

Ryan Olechnowicz
Assistant Business Manager
Local Union No. 17, IBEW

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