

RECOMMENDATIONS from FIRST IBEW WOMEN'S CONFERENCE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY BRANCH CAUCUS

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These are recommendations from the construction industry branch caucus of the IBEW Women's Conference held September of 1997 in Washington DC. The conference provided a tremendous opportunity to utilize the energy and talents of IBEW sisters to create a positive plan of action for our union as a whole. We propose that these guiding principles be adopted at all levels of the IBEW.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE IBEW AT ALL LEVELS

The fair and full inclusion of women at all levels of the IBEW requires the combined efforts of the entire membership, as well as the resources of our union. We therefore recommend that the following principles be adopted by the IBEW; and that they be actively used in developing and implementing policies and programs in all aspects of our union's work. We recognize that our day-to-day efforts must be consistent with our goals and responsibilities as trade unionists.

The IBEW recognizes that:

1. All members, as representatives of the union and ambassadors of the labor movement, carry a responsibility to combat discrimination in all its forms, giving specific attention to sexism, racism and homophobia.
2. Workforce diversity is most successful in workplaces where high standards of dignity and safety are respected, and is therefore a measure of the strength of trade unionism.
3. Family responsibilities, including childcare and eldercare, are a primary concern to working people.
4. Fair distribution of work is an extension of collective bargaining.
5. Achieving a critical mass of women in our workforce (recruitment, retention and leadership) will be the best measure of our commitment to affirmative action and equity.

PROJECT PLANS

We further recommend that the IBEW adopt the following project plans, to be implemented with the same efficiency, ingenuity and perseverance that our construction industry members bring to their jobs. We honor the progress that has already been achieved by making a commitment to follow through on this program until completion.

- The IBEW welcomes women (a message for men and women).
- The IBEW trains women.
- The IBEW advocates for a workplace that is safe, fair and harassment free for all members.
- The IBEW represents women.
- The IBEW contractor employs women at all levels of the workforce.
- The IBEW promotes women's leadership on the job, in the union and into the industry.
- The IBEW advocates for women in all political arenas: local, national and international.
- The IBEW actively solicits the input and leadership of women members.

We further propose that:

1. **The International develop and distribute an informational booklet** addressed to the particular concerns of women in our union, to clarify standards, policies, procedures and services of the IBEW. We recommend that this booklet be available in April of 1998, to celebrate the 20th anniversary of federal affirmative action policies. (See addendum)
2. **The International conduct research** relevant to achieving the full and fair inclusion of women. The goal of research at the International level shall be to dramatically increase the percentage of women in our workforce by identifying obstacles to women's participation and recommending solutions. (See addendum).

IMPLEMENTATION

Achievement of these project plans will depend on the combined efforts of all members and all parts of the industry, in particular that

Women members:

- Encourage and support other female members;
- Participate in women's groups and conferences;
- Participate in diversity training;
- Address problems of sexual harassment and discrimination when they arise;
- Develop their skills as capable workers and union leaders;
- Participate in local union meetings, committees and events;
- Assist their local in developing an action plan for the recruitment; mentoring, training, and retention of women.

All members, male and female:

- Participate in diversity training;
- View the issues of women as union issues;
- Encourage and support female members;
- Address problems of sexual harassment and discrimination when they arise;
- Assist their local in developing an action plan for the recruitment; mentoring, training and retention of women;

Local leadership:

- Provide diversity training to all members with particular attention to officers, stewards, foremen, teachers and new apprentices;
- View the issues of women as union issues;
- Encourage and support female members;
- Develop and implement an action plan for the recruitment, mentoring, training and retention of women;
- Establish and communicate to all members clear policies and complaint procedures against harassment and discrimination and pro-actively address problems of sexual harassment and discrimination;
- Strongly advocate in their communities and local legislatures for issues of particular concern to working women, including pay equity, family leave, and childcare;
- Encourage contractors to hire and promote women through education, advocacy and contract language;

- Establish a women's committee and/or ombudsperson;
- Personally welcome new women members;
- Appoint women to union leadership positions.

International leadership:

- Hold an Annual Women's Conference, insisting on attendance of male representatives, and encouraging locals to inform and send their female members;
- Support District conferences for women;
- Establish an International women's advisory committee;
- Develop and provide to locals outreach materials designed for the recruitment of women into our industry;
- Develop and distribute informational booklets designed to encourage the retention and leadership of women in our industry;
- Appoint a woman as an International vice-president;
- Strongly advocate legislatively and in the AFL-CIO for issues of particular concern to working women, including pay equity, family leave, and childcare;
- Document and publicize, for the purpose of replication by other locals, best practices that lead to the successful recruitment, training, retention and advancement of women members, with attention to the importance of racial and ethnic diversity in our organization;
- Publicize the contributions of women members;
- Increase female representation in the IBEW Journal;
- Ensure that all materials distributed by the International are gender-sensitive.

Apprenticeship training programs:

- Inform all applicants to the apprenticeship program of a "zero tolerance" policy for sexual harassment and discrimination;
- Provide diversity training and sexual harassment prevention training for all apprentices;
- Give particular attention to positive first job placements for new female apprentices;
- Provide mentoring to all apprentices;
- Include women in apprenticeship teaching staff and administration;
- Monitor both classroom and on-the-job instruction to ensure that female apprentices graduate with equitable training in the full range of work in our industry, ready to be employed at levels comparable to men;
- Ensure that all training materials are gender sensitive.

Contractors:

- Place female apprentices on the full range of job assignments available;
- Hire, encourage, and promote journeylevel women;
- Support women who are in leadership and supervisory positions.
- Provide worksites where there is "zero tolerance" for harassment and discrimination by having clear policies and complaint procedures, educating supervisors in prevention techniques, and distributing and posting EEO policies.

Other Organizations:

- Become partners in the IBEW's recruitment efforts for women;
- Become partners in the IBEW's efforts to educate all members in the practices of workplaces that respect diversity;
- Become partners in the IBEW's efforts to respond to the childcare needs of its members.

ADDENDUM

1. **The International develop and distribute an informational booklet** addressed to the particular concerns of women in our union, to clarify standards, policies, procedures and services of the IBEW. We recommend that this booklet be available in April of 1998, to celebrate the 20th anniversary of federal affirmative action policies.
2. **The goal of research at the International level shall be** to dramatically increase the percentage of women in our workforce by identifying obstacles to women's participation and recommending solutions. We appreciate that this will not only benefit all our members and move our own union forward, but will also be a significant contribution to the labor movement as a whole. In particular ***we recommend that the International:***
 - Monitor, by local and district, ***membership levels*** of female apprentices and journeywomen so that assistance can be offered to those locals and districts where figures are low or dropping, and best practices can be shared from those locals and districts where figures are strong or rising. We recommend that statistics always be broken down by racial/ethnic categories, in recognition of the particular urgency to recruit, retain and advance African American, Latina, Asian American and Native American women in our industry.
 - Monitor, by local and district, ***leadership levels*** achieved by female members so that assistance in promoting women can be offered to those locals and districts where figures are low or dropping and best practices can be shared from those locals and districts where figures are strong or rising.
 - Link with the AFL-CIO focus on ***pay equity*** by conducting a comparative study of members by gender to look at: a) ANNUAL wages; b) whether or not covered by health and welfare; c) whether or not vested in pension plan; and d) at the apprentice level: hours worked per year; length of time required to complete apprenticeship; and number of contractors worked for during apprenticeship.
 - Survey ***women who have left the industry or who have been unemployed for an extended period of time***, to identify the cause and to identify under what circumstances they might return.
 - Initiate and participate in a cross-trade study of ***health concerns*** for women working in the construction industry, including medical problems resulting from the stress of harassment and issues particular to members who are pregnant or breastfeeding.
 - Research solutions to the problems of ***childcare*** for members of our industry.