



# Official Publication of Local Union #347

## ~ Business Manager's Report ~

Sisters and Brothers,

There has been a lot of press on the recent HEROES Act passed by the 116th Congress on May 15. I bring this up for two reasons, the first is that although there are many needed benefits to the Act there are also very serious underlying issues. Beginning on page 1,241 you will find the GROW Act, Giving Retirement Options to Workers Act. This Act has the potential to decimate multiemployer defined benefit pension plans such as our own NEBF. The Act allows existing plans to refinance obligations to workers and retirees so they can create a new composite plan, draining money from the existing plan to cover the costs of both. This weakens the existing plan, leaving neither plan with enough money to pay for benefits. A current model shows that with the recent economic crisis, retirees under an existing plan would have seen benefit cuts by 21%.

Composite plans are not required to pay premiums to the PBGC even though their very creation would dramatically compound existing insolvency issues. This would force many existing plans out, increasing the liabilities for those that remain. Composite plans would not require withdrawal liability, which is an exit fee employers in defined benefit multiemployer pension plans must pay, to leave the plan. This would open the door for employers to walk out on their obligations to workers, leaving us holding the bag in the form of decreased benefits. Composite plans would be required to be funded at 120% of plan liabilities. Plans below this threshold would be required to take actions such as increasing employer contribution rates, reducing benefits for current workers and reducing retiree benefits.

We cannot allow the HEROES Act to sacrifice the retirement security of hundreds of thousands of American workers, including yourself, which is the second reason I bring this to you. IBEW in Iowa has been reaching out to Congresswomen Cindy Axne and Abby Finkenauer to inform them of our serious opposition to the Grow Act. We expressed our serious concerns relating to the inclusion of the GROW Act within the HEROES Act and asked them to pressure the House Speaker to remove the GROW Act prior to a vote. Although ultimately, the Act was not removed prior to the vote, both Congresswomen stood strong with IBEW and put their neck on the line for us by voting against it. Time and time again, Cindy Axne and Abby Finkenauer have proven themselves to be IBEW Strong. Please give them a call and thank them for protecting our retirement benefits!

I plan to convene our **General Membership Meeting as scheduled on June 11** but we will need to take precautions. If you have been sick, experienced symptoms related to the Coronavirus or traveled from another state or country at any time in the past two calendar weeks, please do not attend the meeting. If you are otherwise concerned for any reason, do not feel compelled to attend. All members will be required to wear face masks at the meeting on June 11. LU 347 will provide the mask, you do not need to bring one unless you want to. Get your dues paid in advance through June 2020. **The dues office will close at noon on June 11** until the morning of June 12. Merchandise will be available again beginning on June 1, however, all **merchandise sales will be unavailable from noon on June 11** until the morning of June 12.

Most of our work continues to progress as scheduled. As you know, we have been deemed Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers by the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency within the U.S. Department of

*Continued*