June 28, 2018

RE: Janus Decision

To all Members, Family, and Friends of IBEW Local 6,

Yesterday, the Supreme Court delivered what can be described as, for all intents and purposes, a politically motivated decision; Janus v. AFSCME. For over forty years, Unions representing public sector workers (like Local 6 does) had to balance their duties of representation with the rights of the represented workers. As Justice Kagan noted, "a government entity could require public employees to pay a fair share of the cost that a union incurs when negotiating on their behalf over terms of employment. But no part of that fair-share payment could go to any of the union's political or ideological activities."

No court decision can extinguish the desire of working people standing together in unions to create better lives for our families and communities. California needs strong unions to stand up to the rich and powerful who rig the economy against workers.

Our Actions and Responsibility
IBEW Local 6 has not required public sector workers to join the Union, nor have we spent their 'fair share' agency fees on political or ideological activity. Simply put, we followed the law to the letter.

IBEW Local 6 has negotiated in good faith, on behalf of both IBEW members and non-members, and has defended them all with vigor in any and all disciplinary matters. Once again, simply put, we followed the law to the letter. We will continue to fulfill our representational responsibilities as we are required to do, because when we stand together, we have power. That power gives us a shot at the American Dream.

From Our International Union
The IBEW released the following statement in reaction to the Janus decision.

This is not just an attack on public-sector workers. It is an attack on every single American who works for a living, and it is only the first step in an effort to repeal every right won by working people in this country.

But while the Supreme Court may attack our rights, it can never stop a movement whose time has come. Across this country, workers are standing up and joining unions in higher numbers than we have seen in many years and the IBEW, along with the entire labor movement, will never stop fighting for the basic dignity and welfare of working America.

-International President Lonnie Stephenson
Moving Forward, We Look Back
The press and social media were quick to release their characterization of this decision, some of which were “Fatal Blow to Unions”, “Union Crippling Decision”, etc. The truth is that this decision, while disruptive, does not signal the demise of the labor movement. The rights we enjoy as Union members have not gone away. We have a seat at the table to negotiate fair wages and benefits. We still have the freedom to stand together in a Union.

IBEW Local Union 6 members have worked in public sector employment since our inception, originally at the Department of Electricity, and through the years we have added members at the SFMTA, Hetch Hetchy, San Francisco International Airport, and the School District to name a few. For many of those years our members did not have the rights and benefits they have today, and the ability of the Union to represent them was not as expansive as it now is.

It can be easy to overlook the fact that our Local Union predates the Railway Labor Act, the Norris-La Gaurdia Act (eliminated yellow dog contracts), the National Labor Relations Act (aka the Wagner Act), and the Fair Labor Standards Act. IBEW Local 6 has been elevating the lives of working people longer than the government has.

This is not the first time we have faced adversity or hostile courts in our history. We have survived two World Wars, two depressions, several recessions, industrialization and de-industrialization, the ‘American Plan’, Open Shop, and Merit Shop, plus more than our fair share of bad court decisions. Add to that at least two major earthquakes, one of which burned most of the City to the ground. Every time the world tries to knock us down, we get back up.

And we will again.

Fraternally,

John J. Doherty
Business Manager – Financial Secretary

JJD:rd
OPE-29-AFL-CIO(37)