

# DEPARTMENTAL NEWS

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## The Washington Connection

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### Election Results: How Much Do They Matter?

Election Day is over, and fortunately the outcome, for the most part, favored the working men and women of this country. The race for President and control of the Senate, as well as picking up a few House seats, all represented a huge victory for Labor. It was certainly a much-needed victory considering the political environment Labor has faced the past two years. Our sincere thanks and appreciation go out to all the members and officers who volunteered their time to support endorsed candidates.

As fortunate as these results were, we should never rest on our laurels. The political and legislative process is an extremely important aspect of our Union's survival that we should not take for granted. Win or lose on any Election Day, we must continue to move forward and not allow election results to sway our determination to become a stronger union.

Throughout the history of the labor movement, we have faced times of growth and prosperity as well as times of struggle, such as recent attacks on labor in the states of Wisconsin, Ohio and Indiana. That struggle should be the catalyst for developing a strategy on a local level to become a stronger, more viable organization.

Successful businesses are adept in adjusting to various market conditions. In a weak economy they cut back, and in a strong one the strategy is to expand market share. Businesses constantly adjust their plan to adapt to external factors that they cannot change. They do not sit idly, waiting for a strong economy to return. These adjustments can be difficult but are necessary for survival.

Our organization should use the same strategies as a business. When conditions are in our favor, we take advantage of it, expanding and ultimately prospering. On the other hand, when conditions take a downturn, we need

the foresight to make necessary adjustments, not only to survive, but to thrive.

Federal, state and local legislation have a huge impact on our lives. As union members and leaders, we should be active in making sure we are fairly represented—not only on a national and state level, but locally as well. Everything we have gained through our union has been legislated at one time in history, and it can be legislated away. Case in point is the Indiana “right to work” law, unfortunately passed earlier this year. Project labor agreements are another example; several state legislators have attempted to ban them on state-funded projects, thus reducing our job prospects.

The legislative process can work to our advantage, but it can also weaken our ability to organize and secure work for our members, as well as diminish long-standing safe workplace regulations. When legislators that are not friendly to the principles of working class America are in the majority, we suffer the consequences. These consequences might be a setback to our growth and ability to secure steady hours for our members, but that needn't be the end of the world.

Just as successful business models weather the storm, we should consider the same philosophy. Our sustainability and growth potential will be determined by our ability to adapt to ever-changing external market conditions. For example: when a state has banned the use of project labor agreements, consider approaching local-level (city or county) legislators to garnish support for their use on locally funded projects.

Do not underestimate the importance of the legislative process to our union! Everything we have gained has been directly or indirectly through politics. It is the strongest tool we have to prosper in this industry. However, we cannot allow the legislative agenda of those who oppose the labor movement to determine our fate. We must learn to adapt in challenging, as well as prosperous, conditions. Regardless of how the elections turned out, we need to capitalize on the circumstances.

**To each and every member and officer who has supported our union the past year, I thank you and I hope you have a Merry Christmas and a safe and prosperous New Year. ■**