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IBEW Statement on EPA Carbon Emission Rules

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The IBEW is studying the lengthy rule on carbon emissions for existing facilities. We will review it with a fair but critical eye, as our concerns with the EPA's new rule are the same as we have expressed over past agency dictates — namely that the regulations focus solely on the environmental aspect of public policy at the expense of balancing our nation's economic and energy needs.

The President spoke eloquently over the weekend about concerns for public health and cleaner air. Like most Americans, we share those goals. It will do our nation little good however, to achieve these goals at the expense of a balanced energy portfolio capable of meeting the demands of modern society. The jobs of thousands of working men and women and the well-being of their communities are also worthy of saving.

The EPA has a track record of underestimating the impact of its rules, making faulty predictions that have cost tens of thousands of good jobs. In 2011 the IBEW and several other unions testified before the agency, predicting that 56 gigawatts of generation would be lost due to plant closings under then-proposed rules. At the time, the EPA estimated only 4.7 gigawatts would be lost. Our experience in the industry enabled us to see what the agency's models could not. Approximately 90 percent of the plants scheduled to close were required to run during last winter's polar vortex to prevent grid disruption. Experts now confirm that 56 gigawatts will indeed be lost by 2016. We will critically examine the new rules to determine how much additional capacity could be lost, and we hope the EPA will take our estimates seriously this time.

Despite the wishes of the President and the environmental movement, renewable energy such as wind and solar are simply not ready to replace other fuel sources in meeting the demand for electrical power and will not be for the foreseeable future. That leaves natural gas as the only viable alternative in the short term. Our nation has learned from bitter experience that relying too heavily on one energy source is not a sound policy.

We will continue to work with the President and the EPA to craft rules that are more in tune with the reality of the electrical power system and that are part of a balanced approach that moves our nation toward achieving all of its goals for the environment, the economy and our energy future.

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The [International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers](#) (IBEW) represents approximately 725,000 active members and retirees who work in a wide variety of fields, including utilities, construction, telecommunications, broadcasting, manufacturing, railroads and government. The IBEW has members in both the United States and Canada and stands out among the American unions in the AFL-CIO because it is among the largest and has members in so many skilled occupations.

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