

**Written Remarks of Ralph Neidert,
Assistant Director, NECA/IBEW 26, Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee**

**“Make It in America: What’s Next?” District Field Hearing
PANEL TWO: Skills Training for the Future**

Congressman Hoyer, panel members, and distinguished guests,

My name is Ralph Neidert. I am the assistant training director for the NECA/IBEW Local 26 Joint Apprenticeship & Training Committee (JATC). I am a 35 year member of the IBEW and a product of the apprenticeship. In my career I have been an apprentice, journeyman, sub-foreman, foreman, jobsite steward, instructor, and assistant training director. Our program, a joint effort between management (NECA) and labor (IBEW), under the guidance of the Electrical Training Alliance, provides career training to approximately 900 apprentices per year, as well as nearly 1,000 residential trainees.

Apprentices complete a 5 year apprenticeship, which is registered with the State of Maryland, as well as Virginia and the District of Columbia. Apprentices must successfully pass an aptitude test to obtain an interview, and prior to being selected, must pass a comprehensive background check and urinalysis. Once selected and assigned to an employer they attend classes one day every other week while working in the field under the supervision of a journeyman electrician. Apprentices attend classes every other week, summers included, for a period of 5 years. Because there are no summer breaks they complete 5 years of training in only 4 years and are free to choose which journeyman level classes they attend in their 5th year. The JATC currently offers 20 to 25 classes per semester for the soon to be journeyman to choose from, fine tuning their training prior to topping out of the program. The cost of this education is essentially free to the participant, so each apprentice that graduates from the 5 year program is free from student loans and other associated educational costs such as books and lab fees. OK, you might ask, how is a training program of this size free to the participants? Nothing is free, right? For every hour worked in the field by every Local 26 member, a contribution is made to the JATC by the employer on behalf of the IBEW member that performed the work. This fund, called the Joint Apprenticeship & Training Trust Fund, pays for the books, tuition fees, instructor payroll, administrative costs, lab and material costs, and oh yes, we actually pay our apprentices to attend their daytime classes. Apprentices that meet the minimum qualifications, passing their daily quiz/test, are given a stipend equal to one day’s wages.

The apprenticeship program is very comprehensive. Each apprentice is required to obtain a minimum of 8,000 hours on-the-job and 800 hours of related classroom instruction. Attendance in class is mandatory and each apprentice may not miss more than two classes in a school year.

Each apprentice that completes the program is well on their way to a career in the electrical industry. During the 5 year program apprentices are certified in OSHA 30, 1st Aid/CPR, and effective foremanship which will start them on a career with endless opportunities. Opportunities include being a journeyman wireman, foreman, superintendent, project manager, estimator, company owner, instructor, union representative, and more. Upon completion of the program, apprentices may opt to receive up to 60 credits from the American Council on Education, for a modest fee of only \$45.

Effective June 1, 2015 1st year apprentices receive \$19.26 per hour plus an extensive fringe package that includes health and welfare coverage (medical insurance) and contributions to 4 pension funds. After 6 months apprentices are eligible for a 2% raise and 10 paid holidays. After the first year apprentices receive an additional

3% raise, and then 10% increases each successive year, taking their wages to over \$34.00 per hour in their 5th year. The current journeyman pay rate of pay is \$42.80 per hour plus benefits after successful completion of the program.

Our JATC is entirely self-funded by contributions from employers based on man hours worked in the Local 26 jurisdiction. We currently offer training to 900 apprentices, 1,000 residential trainees and 5,000 journeymen. The budget of the JATC is currently \$8,000,000 per year, and we receive no monies from outside sources or governments. To me this is what “Make It In America” is all about; training our workforce to be the very best, most productive, best educated, and safest workforce in the world.