

# Time to Do What is Nece

**W**hen I reflect on the theme of our General Convention, "Change Makes Us Stronger," I can't help of thinking of the old saying that "that which does not kill you, makes you stronger." Well, we're still here and we're going to continue to be here.

I thank you this morning for the resolutions that were passed. Those were changes that might, in some folks' mind, be controversial, but I guarantee you that those are changes that will make us stronger, too.

Before I begin, I want to make several acknowledgments. First and foremost, I want to thank God for the many blessings he's bestowed on our union—two blessings in particular that some would call luck or timing but I know were blessings. First, we sold our interests in our building in Washington, DC, at the height of the real estate market. And second, we merged our Officers and Staff Pension Plan into the Industry Pension Plan at the height of the stock market, thus eliminating, at that moment in time, any unfunded liability of the Officers and Staff Pension Plan. These two events, happening when they did, resulted in an \$18-million gain or savings for our union. That wasn't an accident. [Applause.]

I also want to thank God for my personal blessings, especially the love and support of my wife, Dana, and my sons, Emilio and Zachary. Also, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge my staff that I depend on, whose dedication to our union is demonstrated daily by their actions. To all the dedicated men and women who serve the membership in the General Secretary-Treasurer's office, thank you for your great work. [Applause.]

I'm also blessed to be part of a great leadership team that's been put together by General President Williams, and

he's also a blessing who was sent to us to lead our union at just the right time. [Applause.]

To my partners, General President James Williams, Executive General Vice President Ken Rigmalden, and the rest of the General Executive Board, I say "thank you" for your dedication and for creating a work environment where the priority is always "how do we make our union better and stronger."

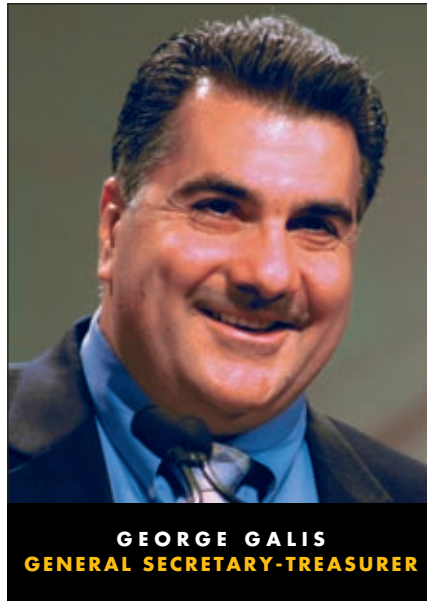
Five years have flown by since we last met in convention. We have seen tremendous blows to our economy and our pension investments. We have withstood an eight-year assault on the entire labor movement by politicians who believe we should not exist, and we stood off raiding unions. Through all of that, the IUPAT has thrived.

We have taken steps to ensure our pension fund is stable for the future. We have elected a labor-friendly president and Congress. Our membership has grown, though, of late, the economy has eaten away at some of those gains. As the Finance Committee and GST Committee will report, and as detailed in my written report to the Convention, our finances have increased at a time when we have spent unprecedented amounts of our resources in direct financial assistance to our affiliate district councils and local unions.

I urge you to read the written report to the convention, if you have not

already done so. It tells a vivid story of the last five years and points to where we are heading.

Between the IUPAT and its affiliated trust funds, we have more programs and policies designed to enhance market share, organizing efforts, and training than ever before; however, this is no time to rest on our accomplishments, but rather (a time) to build on them. Even now that we can look at our accomplishments and the blows that we have withstood with pride, we still have tremendous challenges. Our economy is not recovering fast enough. Even with a change of leadership in Washington, DC, labor law reform is not happening fast enough. Predator unions think the way to organize is to attempt to devour other unions and their jurisdictions. In markets where we have the most work opportunities right now, we have the



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# ssary, Not What is Easy

greatest shortages of manpower. And we face many other obstacles, both from within our organization and from the outside.

The good news is, we have the tools and the resources to overcome and thrive as one powerful union. We have the new leadership series training to provide our newest leaders with the skills they need to better perform their duties. We have an organizing department with the expertise to assist you in developing and executing an organizing plan with a systematic approach tailored to the needs of each geographic area. And, what's more, the Organizing and GO funds are there to help fund your efforts. That was not always the case in our organizing efforts.

Some of you heard my story of when I first became an organizer in the early '80s, and I called the then-director of Organizing of the Second District and said, "I'm the newly appointed organizer in Local 6. I've got a question for you. How do you organize?" He said, "Daily," and he hung up. When I tell you that we've come a long way and there is help and there is training, it's true.

We have the STAR and Member Rewards Programs, to give our members an incentive to work safely, enhance their training, and become activists for their union. We have the FTI, and our International Training Center, which are developing more and better training curricula than ever before. Apprenticeship and training representatives are assisting affiliates with enhancing and improving local training programs. A training center where trainers from across North America enhance their ability to teach our next generation. FTI grants to local programs to build better training capacity.

We have a Government Affairs Department, with better funding than at any time in our history, with regional representatives to help you build political power for the betterment of our members. We have the LMCI, with tools too numerous for me to mention all of them, direct financial grants for worthwhile industry endeavors, and industry

liaisons to assist with employer and construction end-user relations. You heard [IBEW] President Hill tell you how important those relationships are.

We have the solidarity status members and affiliate members to assist with member recruitment and retention, and to help our members make it through a rough period. You heard President Hill again talk about the IBEW's similar plan. We have the Top Workplace Performance plan that is a great top-down organizing tool and a means to foster excellence in the workplace. And a note on Top Workplace

Performance: Don't fear it, and your employers shouldn't fear it. If (it's) implemented and used properly, the potential liability for both union and employer lessens, not increases. If an employer lays off a bad employee, not giving a reason, and then hires a replacement the next day, the union and the employer have greater legal exposure than if the terminated employee was given a just-cause reason.

Those (are) just a few of the tools and resources, policies, and programs at your disposal. We must make more efficient use of all of our resources and ideas. We must

take charge and do for ourselves and our membership. We must stop saying "That won't work" or "This will not fly in my area" or "That's how we always did it," and adopt a "can-do, we-will-find-a-way-to-succeed" attitude not just when we leave a training class or a seminar or this convention—when we're fired up about new ideas and innovations—but each and every day. Our worst enemies are complacency, fear of failure, and—unfortunately, in a few cases—apathy.

As Rich Trumka said on Monday, nostalgia for the past is not a strategy for the future. We must and will be progressive, productive, and realistic in dealing with the issues that confront us. In recent years, the size of our union has been reflective of the economy—more than just recent years, in (all) my years of membership. We have ridden the economy up and down with each boom-and-

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bust cycle. Our average market share of the available work in the trades we represent is around 20 percent or less. If we would set the modest goal of increasing market share by 1 percent per year between now and the next time we meet in convention, we would grow and strengthen our union—even in a down economy.

To do that will take changing the status quo. We will need innovative and courageous approaches to organizing and collective bargaining, and we will need every tool (available) to us in (gaining) the cooperation of our employer partners. You and me, here in this hall, as the combined leadership of our union, have the power to make it happen—the power to go beyond being caretakers of what we inherited, and grow and improve our union.

I truly believe you're the best in the labor movement. I know most of you personally, and I know your hearts are in the right place. All we have to do is approach each day with a positive attitude and ask ourselves, "What can we do today to make the lives of our mem-

bers better and our union stronger?" We must ask ourselves if each activity we undertake will lead to more (work) hours and market share for our members. We must have the attitude that we will leave this union better than we found it, regardless of the political risks or the short-term popularity of an idea.

Achieving our goals in organizing, training, political action and labor relations in this economic environment will not be easy. However, I heard President Obama, in his first address to Congress and the nation, say, in reference to his plans (to move) out of the economic problems we're faced with, "It will not be easy, but this is America and we don't do what's easy; we do what's necessary."

It is that time also in the history of the IUPAT for us to do what is necessary and not what's easy. I leave you with that thought to ponder.

I thank you for your support and your hard work on behalf of our members. I pray that God grants us the strength, wisdom, and courage to lead our union forward. May God bless you and our union.

Thank you.

